

Sunday June 2

1. In my 1964 study  
of CII, with as chosen  
I picked up

not a hint of

Mongolian

manners

Oct planning

assess planning

e.g. Not in 2 CIA studies,

PFAB files, or ExCom notes

(not in 1962 study :)

NOR FROM ECL in 1965-67

Mind has not yet been  
unraveled:

San admits he lived  
in RFK mansion

RFK lived

McN + McG are still  
lying, covering...

(after 71, & lost access  
to their papers — and  
nothing had come out).

how does still present.

JUNE 4, 1990

Crisis

CII

Crisis  $\leftarrow$  surprise;

but }  
which i }

a threat to

lover's real

(personal) values/  
"security" / goals

~~Worse~~

Wf so common? (for x)

a) other  $\rightarrow$  to surprise x

or other (x enforcement)

b) The surprise is greater / worse  
(more threatening, <sup>arguing</sup> hostility)

the former).

Further by scholars not  
leading <sup>A</sup> to foresee what  
will cause B to take  
what actions (to A; to B)  
to be highly risky actions

Wang hypo:

1) Threat/risk of violence is  
a response to prospects or  
occurrence of violence

[NO: see "penal" - for  
respect  
breaking "laws": of states, difference

2) Identical action must be  
commensurate with prospect  
framed, in scale & type  
not personal/political reasons  
→ threat to physical survival

3) (VS) Public statements reveal  
values, motives, perceptions...

4) B sees some risks as

A

or (a) is loosely coupled to  
"reality, evidence"

(b) has different model (B may be  
"right", or evidence: low risk)

\c2\secrecy  
July 22, 1990

# Notes on The Cuban Missile Crisis as a Case Study in Historical Deception

Consider the epistemological and historiographical problems of writing the history of and analysing an episode involving at the time highly secret information in different categories of sensitivity, including compartmented intelligence and politically sensitive secrets; where even high-level participants (including, at one stage, even the president!) were denied crucial data that others at the same bureaucratic level possessed; where the need to deceive domestic political rivals and public was intense and lasting; and where participants, officials and memoirists feel bound by team loyalty and by official requirements to maintain secrecy and, where necessary, deception indefinitely

To evaluate the judgments and inferences made by any particular analyst, scholar, or even former participant, it becomes essential to ask: What did he know, and when did he know it?

Note that virtually every researcher, even those with enough access to secret information to have learned how lack of it has distorted other analyses and who are aware that they have not gained access to identifiable bodies of information, has shown remarkable resistance to the insight, even as a hypothesis: I don't know all I need to know, to understand this fully or even adequately."

Each tends to conclude, at the point of publication or or writing up what seems to him (all males) a fairly coherent account, that information that may emerge in future will simply change a few details, fill in a few gaps.

Note my discovery of this, in 1964, in the course of reading successively studies of the crisis done at different levels of clearance or with different access. Each would express the final conclusion, "Now we have the picture, though there are some loose ends to tie up."

The Allison/Harvard emphasis on Bureaucratic Politics tends to downplay the (crucial) importance of access to White House information and memoranda, Oval Office in particular (like RMN--or for that matter, JFK and LBJ, still unavailable--tapes of Oval Office conversations and presidential phone calls and dictabelts).

(These are largely missing from the Pentagon Papers, a crucial lack: as the Berman book, using McGeorge Bundy files, just began to reveal).

At least I was aware, after reading the Pentagon Papers, that I didn't know (I didn't even have very confident hypotheses) why this succession of presidents had all made the decisions they did in Vietnam: LBJ in 1965 above all. It's still mysterious, though I have stronger hypotheses than I did.

At last--I felt this more last night (with my reflections on the lack of discussion of Mongoose and pre-crisis invasion preparations, or of the option of offering to terminate these, from the ExCom records or other records) than ever before--I understand why McGeorge Bundy was so skeptical about my proposed project in 1964 on Crisis Communications, my hopes of discovering useful lessons from patterns of behavior in crises.

He said then that he doubted useful lessons could be drawn--or the crises usefully understood--without access to White House data. And he did not propose to give me access to White House data.

With the new data on Mongoose aims, on pre-crisis preparations, on the questions this raises about the significance of the ExCom, yet with the new transcripts (which, it must be said, he helped provide: and censor?) and data from the Soviets, Dobrynin in particular: it is clear why he made the first judgment--referring specifically to the Cuban Missile Crisis, after all!--and also why he refused me access.

The underlying issue is not merely that of historical understanding, but societal self-understanding and the political accountability of "representatives," an issue of politics and sovereignty. The case for and against secrecy in matters of foreign and defense policy is the case for and against democratic control of foreign policy.

It would not be hard to guess where McGeorge Bundy really stands on this issue. He almost surely believes in elite, "aristocratic" predominance over issues of foreign policy--and in particular, Executive branch predominance over Congress (or courts\_ and within the Executive Branch, Presidential control. (His own Brahmin background includes Groton, Yale, Skull and Bones, the Society of Fellows, and Dean of the Harvard Faculty).

He almost surely disparages the ability of "the public," and perhaps of anyone but specialists with high-level Executive branch experience and access, to understand foreign policy matters and the "national interest" adequately and "dispassionately." (I guess this without ever having seen anything he has written or said on this directly). Nor can I believe he takes a very confining view of Constitutional or legal constraints on the President, any more than, say, his brother's father-in-law Dean Acheson.

His attitudes on secrecy are more accessible, and are consistent with the above guesses about his view of democracy and foreign policy, of the public's "right and need to know." He has publicly described a public servant--especially one in a position of special trust such as he held with Kennedy and Johnson--who would ever reveal publicly anything he learned in his job, especially anything at all damaging to his employer, as analogous to a servant who is given a loaded gun as part of his job and who turns it on his patron.

Moreover, unlike other former officials, he has lived up to this code. He has long felt a concern about nuclear weapons policies, but his massive book on the subject, though presented partly as a memoir covering a generation of Executive branch involvement with the subject, reveals, so far as I can tell, not one piece of information that he cannot attribute to previously published, unclassified sources.

In the case of the Cuban Missile Crisis, one of his longest chapters, he contributes, as elsewhere, judgments and bureaucratic insights reflecting his experience, but no new information. (Check what he says, if anything, on Mongoose). When confronted with data on pre-crisis invasion planning by Jim Hershberg, he described this as late as 1987 as "routine contingency planning": certainly conscious deception. (He is one who still has a lot to tell).

His own experience with secrecy and deception goes back a long time. He was intimately related with one of the most significant hoaxes of the Twentieth Century: he was the drafter of Stimson's Harper's article on the reasons for dropping the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. (His father was Stimson's personal secretary, i.e., special assistant; he also worked on (wrote?) Stimson's autobiography, and edited Acheson's speeches, one or both of these while he was a Junior Fellow).

As the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, he presided over the highest-level

committee overseeing all covert operations, and his office was the focal point for all intelligence and estimates addressed to the President. No one, in other words, had greater access to, or broader daily involvement in the workings of the secrecy system and the operations and product of the intelligence community.

[It was in the office of his deputy Carl Kaysen (a reader of my undergraduate thesis on game theory) that I heard a brief discussion of the workings of the compartmented clearance system, the clearances "higher than top secret," of which I later came to hold 12. Alain Enthoven had remarked that he wondered how many such clearances there were in all, and whether anyone held all of them. "I do," said Kaysen with unconcealed satisfaction; "I have all of them."

He was new to the system, and the other three of, Enthoven, Harry Rowen and me, looked briefly at each other in what I understood to be a slightly complicit, condescending mood. As I understood the system, and as I then believed the others understood it, that remark stamped someone who had not yet really grasped how the system operated. An experienced person, I believe, could not possibly express such confidence in such a judgment. There would simply be no way to know this, even for the President, or his Special Assistant.

So far as I know, not one person who has ever held one of these clearances--except myself--has ever revealed publicly (or to Congress) the nature of the system, or the cult and culture of secrecy that incorporates it. (I discussed it in 1971 in a "seminar" of the senior senators "chaired" by Sam Ervin, testified before joint hearings of subcommittees under Kennedy, Ervin and Muskie, and described it in an interview in Rolling Stone in 1973).

That reticence both maintains and expresses that cult; it reflects both an internalization of the values and practices of the secrecy culture and a very rational calculation of the requirements and desirability of remaining employable at high governmental levels (and remaining a member of the club).

Part of this study of CII must be to describe the character of this system, its psychological and bureaucratic effects, and its effect on the "knowability" of data surrounding such crises.

It is noteworthy that no member of ANSA (except perhaps Agee)--with all their experience, former access, and willingness to reveal their own past operations--has addressed this issue in general terms. Several, like MacMichael, undoubtedly have the ability to do so with great insight.

Moreover, since the legal restraints on their own revelations and other former officials' are so damaging to the possibility of democratic understanding and control of foreign policy, ANSA might well take an institutional role in opposing, not only covert operations, but current secrecy regulations: in particular, the steps that the Reagan and Bush Administrations have done to establish long-term control over officials' speech and writing even outside the intelligence community.

### The Study of Secrecy

Lack of outsiders' understanding of this problem--and desire to maintain personal relations and access with former officials--has kept both media and scholarly interviewers from ever asking former officials the question: "What made you think you had a right to conceal or lie about this matter so long?"

Thus, "historians" like Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. or Sorensen, or memoirists, or officials like Bundy or

McNamara, who have been caught again and again in having previously lied or concealed, or who have even admitted it, are never challenged on their sense of loyalties and obligations and entitlements that permit them to do this (presumably) in good conscience, or reminded of conflicting obligations, or asked what they are still concealing or lying about.

Nor do former officials or scholars who have come to understand the secrecy system and its impact on public and historical understanding ever undertake, or teach and encourage others to undertake, to investigate or illuminate the workings of the system, and its effects: e.g., pursuing such questions as:

Why do officials lie and conceal? What are the various motives, incentives, aims, rationales, sanctions?

How are secrets kept reliably, for prolonged periods, especially when large numbers of people are involved?

How long can some secrets be kept? How reliably?

What secrets can, or cannot, be kept long? What circumstances or characteristics of the secrets, or the system, bear on this? What are the elements of a theory of the control of leaks?

How is effective secrecy maintained despite leaks? How are leaks "repaired," their effects limited or nullified? How is public attention or inferences and response managed?

What is kept secret, at different levels of "sensitivity"?  
(Recall Enzensberger: "The real secret is what is secret.")  
Why is it secret? What does secrecy conceal?

One of the best-kept secrets, despite large numbers of knowledgeable people and frequent public disclosures, is the importance of SI: the scale of collection and processing and the value of communications and signals intelligence.

The indoctrination here is so rigorous, the discipline so precise, the job and career sanctions (and related cognitive and self-esteem rewards) so sure and compelling (like a strong addiction: to Inside Dope: fear of being cut off...) and the rationale of "national interest and security" depending on secrecy so persuasive, that masses of individuals keep this secret very reliably--even from their closest associates--indefinitely.

Note how long the secret of ULTRA was kept, even though the credit of winning the war could largely be attributed to it, and even though the breaking of MAGIC had been revealed and Roberta Wohlstetter's book had been (finally, overcoming great opposition!) published.

Then there is covert operations! Note my ignorance of any hint of Mongoose, despite a year's use of clearances that gave me access not only to SI and T but to U2 operations and all the refugee interrogations, etc; and despite two years' apprenticeship under Ed Lansdale just two years after he ceased to head Mongoose! (I never heard him mention Cuba or RFK or Maxwell Taylor, let alone Mongoose!)

I learn of Mongoose from the Church Committee, and from Taylor and Branch: in 1977? Then, the

crucial aims and premises of Mongoose are released--in documents still heavily censored!--in the spring of this year, 1990!

When it comes to managing public attention and awareness and opinion, it is clearly essential to manage not only (leaks from) the Executive, but:

Congress: What it investigates (and who does it); who is asked to testify, and how hard is truth pursued; what questions are asked; what is reported, cleared...

(That management is involved here, both of Congress and within Congress, became unmistakably clear in the Irangate "investigation").

The Media.

Universities and Scholarship.

Sources on these processes: First, the Bernstein article in Rolling Stone: still virtually unique, never followed up (nor publishable except in Rolling Stone!) Bernstein used sources and findings that had been excluded, by agreement with CIA, from the Church Committee investigation (which was also headed off from investigating Indonesia, either 1958 or 1965; see the general management of Church, via his presidential candidate ambitions. And see his later behavior on the "unacceptable Soviet brigade in Cuba," in 1979, killing SALT-II).

But even though Bernstein found that the CIA relations with the media were "too sensitive for the Church Report" (compared to assassinations!), he found hints of a relationship still more sensitive than that with the press: CIA relations with universities! (Still no word, a dozen years later, as to why that is so secret, what the secret is.)

The limitations and omissions of the Irangate "investigation" show the sensitivity and the extremely effective management of awareness of CIA relations (i.e., Presidential, Executive Branch relations via CIA: and perhaps Congressional relations as well, in various ways) with drug networks and, more generally, with organized crime: for control of foreign regimes, societies, police forces, municipal authorities; for assassination; for arms smuggling, money laundering, and other aspects of the logistics and financing of covert wars. Because of official rhetoric and declaratory policy ("Wars on Drugs and Crime") and public revulsion, these relations are among the tightest secrets.

(Such relations were heavily involved--thereby contributing to sensitivity about secrecy--in Cuba I, Mongoose and Cuba II, via drug-involved contras recruited or used in all of these for various purposes, assassination attempts against Castro, Presidential nomination and election campaigns (in particular, Sam Giancana's role in the West Virginia primary and the Chicago graveyard vote in 1960), and also, Miami Cuban and organized crime influences on the very aim and importance of overthrowing Castro and "recovering" Cuba!)

(Likewise, in relations with the GVN--e.g., Ky, Loan, Thieu, earlier Ngo Dinh Diem--and Laos (Vang Pao, now returning to SEA), Nationalist China, Afghanistan, Thailand, Burma, Central America and Mexico, Peru/Colombia/Bolivia (Lebanon?)...

Another channel of influence, whose nature is sensitive: Bribery, in particular the distribution of

bribes in connection with arms contracts (e.g., Lockheed). (See the shift in Lockheed bribes in Indonesia just prior to the Suharto takeover in 1965). See flow to extreme right-wingers like Kodama in Japan.

Another sensitive matter: CIA/US relations with, use of, support of, alliance with: "ex"-Nazis, and other "extreme right-wingers."

But I am getting off the subject of CII, into the general question of "What secrecy conceals: Why secrets are secret.

The question of the reasons for and the management of secrecy (the construction of secrecy, of untruth, of deception, of historical misapprehension) is a good approach to the understanding of "conspiracy."

It is increasingly clear that on Cuba II (and Cuba I, Mongoose) there has been for 30 years a conspiracy of silence, and of deception. This is evident from the lies and silence about Kennedy's position on a negotiated outcome of the crisis--trading Turkish missiles (and perhaps, with more significance in his own eyes as well as Khrushchev's than others knew or admitted, a no-invasion pledge) for Cuban missiles--until Bromley Smith's notes and then the Bundy transcripts of October 27 were revealed: despite the knowledge of every member of the ExCom over a quarter of a century.

We even know something about the process of this. E.g., the hierarchical discipline: The President's directive that members of the ExCom were to "sing one tune" in public, and that certain things in particular (not all specified, yet) were to be specially concealed. And note the fate of those, on other occasions, who broke this discipline: e.g., Chester Bowles, after Cuba I. Note the use of selective leaks by the President (?) against Adlai Stevenson.

Then, there is the formal process of compartmentation, as part of the secrecy process. I learned 26 years ago of the existence and the (yet-untold, almost entirely unknown) impact even on Presidential knowledge of a significant dimension of the crisis-process that has never yet been hinted at in other accounts: the PSALM and ELITE clearances in September and October.

It is worth investigating and trying to recall what it was about the crisis in my 1964 that first changed my appreciation of it, or raised puzzling questions, after my participation in 1962? Or even earlier: what did I learn from my participation that separated my understanding from that of the general public, and which led to my determination to study the crisis? These represent case studies in the effects of differential access; as well as sequential stages in a learning process. All of which--like the sequential effects of continuing revelations, on the need (perceived, it seems, mainly by me) to reexamine all questions, to frame new questions, to seek new sources--bears on my current conclusion:

We are somewhere in the middle of our efforts to understand this most-dangerous nuclear crisis nearly thirty years ago: No longer at the beginning, but nowhere near the end!

\c2\election.1  
July 23, 1990

Further notes (starting from beginning) suggested Thomas G. Paterson and William J. Brophy: "November Elections: The Cuban Missile Crisis and American Politics, 1962", Journal of American History, Vol. 73, #1, June 1986, 87-119.

p. 87: "I told you that the President would move on Cuba before [the] election," Sen. Norris Cotton of New Hampshire reminded his constituents a week after President John F. Kennedy had dramatically announced that the United States was imposing a quarantine against Cuba to force Soviet missiles from the Caribbean island. Another Republican standing for reelection in 1962, Rep. Thomas B. Curtis of Missouri, told voters in his district that the Cuban missile crisis was 'phony and contrived for election purposes.' Republican Sen. Barry Goldwater of Arizona, like many others, suspected that the Kennedy administration had played politics with foreign policy to help Democrats in the congressional elections of November 6."

[GET REFS IN FOOTNOTE]

[from now on, instead of quoting, I will put footnote marks in the margin and refer to these in the file; I will either xerox the passages to include with the file or fill them in later]

Thus, Republicans like Norris Cotton were expecting from Kennedy an "October Surprise."

That is the term used by an opposition party referring to a feared or expected foreign policy move by an incumbent administration timed and designed to help win an election. In particular, Reagan in 1980 feared either a new hostage raid on Iran or a deal to release the hostages by Carter, just before the election. Both fears were well founded, though the planning for a second raid seems to have been cancelled by late summer, probably because descriptions of it, possibly distorted, were leaked by anti-Carter elements in the government and published.

Reagan even had a high-level team under Casey and Richard Allen working as the "October Surprise Group" to monitor, foresee and forestall such a deal. Allegedly, it succeeded (according, for instance, to Brenneke), persuading the Iranians to postpone a release that was on the verge of being negotiated on the basis of a promise for much larger arms aid (largely via Israel) than Carter had agreed to.

Both the fear and the secret, non-governmental negotiation followed in the footsteps of Richard Nixon, who feared that LBJ would announce the opening of negotiations with North Vietnam just before the elections, and end the bombing: as LBJ did do. Hersh found later that Nixon had regarded this move as a "day of infamy" which almost lost him the election; he deliberately scheduled his "November Ultimatum" the next year to reopen the bombing of North Vietnam on November 1, the anniversary of the suspension of bombing

emerged, guaranteeing him a domestic political crisis no matter what he did, I argue elsewhere that he did have a choice as to whether to define it and make it as well a national security crisis, involving threats of war between nuclear powers. (The Soviet move in itself posed no such threats, though it was likely to evoke the war crisis that it did: essentially, I would argue, for political reasons. Why the Soviets moved in spite of this likelihood--why, as it now appears, they failed to foresee it--was then and remains one of the great mysteries of the crisis, which I hope to illuminate).

X In this situation, which I would judge Kennedy did not want or foresee (despite more internal consideration of the possibility than has ever been revealed), Kennedy did choose a war crisis, extending at least to the blockade, an unprecedented act of war against a nuclear power.

(I am not sure I have ever seen this characterization of the blockade before. If the Soviets had forbidden air traffic to Berlin as well as blocked ground traffic in 1948, that would have been the precedent! But I don't want to press the point unduly that the Soviet blockade of ground traffic across East Germany was not comparable, whatever the legalities.

Interestingly, that Soviet blockade had evoked for the first time in the postwar era--discounting Truman's claims about Iran in 1946--a tacit American threat of nuclear first-use, in the form of the first deployment of what were publicly described as "nuclear bombers" to Britain. Truman and his advisors believed this implicit threat had been critical to prevailing in the situation, encouraging them to institutionalize such threats in their policy planning.)

c2\introduction  
July 23, 1990

What the leaders of the two nuclear superpowers did in the Caribbean in the fall of 1962 has been known ever since the days of the Cuban Missile Crisis. But why they did it was mysterious then, and in many ways it remains a mystery now.

What was each of them trying to achieve, or to avert? What mattered most, and why did it matter so much? What were their strategies for achieving their goals? How likely did they think they were to succeed, and what made them think that? What did they think they were risking by what they were doing, and why were they willing to risk that?

It did not seem easy to believe fully what either of the leaders was saying publicly at the time about these matters; yet it has never been any easier to come up with different, more plausible explanations. In the eyes of large, different but overlapping numbers of people, each leader seemed to have gone crazy.

That is an unsatisfying conclusion about two leaders entrusted with the command of nuclear weapons: frightening if true, but implausible. Different answers--or at any rate, more confident answers--seemed highly desirable, and still do:

Then, in the height of the crisis, to guess what was likely to follow from different courses, to judge the risk for the citizens of the two nations and for the world, to decide what this global mass of interested parties might suggest or do to help guard their own safety.

Now, to help understand from this example how rivalrous pairs of nuclear-armed states--in a world where such pairs are proliferating--can come close to major, potentially escalating armed combat; and how to avert the risks this possibility poses for all their people, and for life on earth.

To be sure, there are now serious scholars of the crisis--as there have been at every point in the past--who believe with some confidence that with the latest information available they have adequately satisfactory answers to most or all of these questions. On many of these points many of them agree with each other; there is what amounts to a consensus.

But with the help of previously-hidden data these students have not been able to take into account it is possible to demonstrate that every one of these most recently published conclusions is in important respects mistaken. That is what I will argue in this report of work-in-progress, a discussion of the state-of-the-questions: drawing both on crucial new revelations

over the last three years, some as recent as this summer, and on hitherto-unrevealed data known to me since 1962 or 1964 but never previously disclosed in print.

This is still a "preliminary" report on an investigation that has now lasted, for me, almost thirty years. I do believe that some of my oldest hypotheses have stood up long enough--and some of my newest ones now have enough evidence behind them--to be worthy guides to further research, and to suggest some highly useful rules of thumb for better understanding the policy roads ahead.

To express more confidence than that in the finality of my answers at this point would seem, to me, to make the same mistake I have found, over the years, in nearly every other investigation of this episode: premature closure, an unfounded belief that the latest word is "the last word," and that information still to come will only alter or fill in details. The reality has been that nearly every major revelation has put, or should have put every previous conclusion into question, and has opened major new questions.

At the rate these revelations have been coming over the last three years, there is no reason at all to suppose that this process is almost over. After thirty years, we are somewhere in the middle of our efforts adequately to understand this drama: not, any longer, still at the beginning, but nowhere near the end.

Just why this is so, why the puzzles have been so recalcitrant, are questions themselves that deserve more attention than they have received. I propose to throw some light on some very dark corners of the governmental decision-making process: the secrecy system itself, and its bearing on the historiography and indeed, the epistemology of crises like this one, and the risks they pose.

c:/c2/intro ~~Section~~

C: k21 why studying

Outline for Cuba II Story, Monday, June 18, 1990

Why study the Cuban Missile Crisis now?

Because it was the Three Mile Island of the nuclear weapons era.

For a generation it has been believed that the risks that a nuclear weapon would be used in combat would increase as the weapons came to be possessed by larger numbers of states, especially less-developed states, which would probably have less advanced command and control and warning systems and technological restraints, and whose leaders might, in some cases, be less balanced and cautious. That time is now upon us.

But if the danger of a nuclear war is about to increase, the question arises, just how great is that danger likely to be? The answer depends, in part, on our sense of how great the danger was before. Among "experts," something of a consensus seems to be arising that the danger over the last generation was generally overestimated, especially by the public, and that it was, in reality, very small, virtually negligible.

In particular this judgment has been emerging, as new data have appeared in the last few years, for the specific case of the Cuban Missile Crisis, which is generally agreed to have been the most dangerous episode of the nuclear era. If it is true that even in this case the real risk was extremely low, it would follow that the cumulative danger over the whole nuclear era till now had been exaggerated by many and that concern over the risks of proliferation in the future might be similarly overwrought.

On the other hand, if this emerging consensus about the Cuban Missile Crisis should be mistaken--as I have come to conclude--then such a reassurance would be undermined. If, as I believe, the leaders even of the two superpowers did not avoid taking decisions that invoked real, sizeable risks of nuclear war in this confrontation (and perhaps others), then realistic, significant dangers of nuclear war do not begin with proliferation but rather, are increased to still higher levels that justify very urgent concern.

This would not be an unfamiliar judgment. It has been held by a large part of the public at various periods when their anxiety about nuclear war was high, such as at the time of the Missile Crisis itself (and for a year or two earlier) and in the first two years of the Reagan era. But concern has greatly diminished in other periods, when the superpowers seemed less combative and particularly when serious arms control negotiations were underway.

Even before the present dissolution of the Cold War, new data from both US and Soviet former officials seemed to support the retrospective judgment especially among specialists that both they and the public had overestimated the likelihood that the Cuban

Missile Crisis might erupt into superpower war, either non-nuclear or nuclear.

However, I believe that these partial data have been misinterpreted, by analysts who have ignored or missed the significance or been ignorant of still other data which have recently emerged or which have remained secret till now.

Looking at the whole context I find that a lesson of the Crisis is that even leaders of the stature and maturity of John F. Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev, each aware that the other possessed numbers of nuclear missiles capable of inflicting catastrophic damage, consciously took what each saw, correctly, as significant risks of nuclear war (risks that were, in retrospect, even larger than they calculated) for reasons that few responsible observers would judge to justify such risks (if anything could).

If the actual calculations and behavior of these two superpower leaders are taken as a baseline forecast of the possible behavior in crises of leaders much less constrained by public opinion, legal and constitutional strictures, political experience and an experienced bureaucracy, the prospect is not reassuring at all.

To study the Cuban Missile Crisis in the light of these new data and interpretations is to learn both that the risks of an emerging era of nuclear proliferation are indeed ominously great, and to learn some of the reasons why this is true, how nuclear war could actually erupt. This understanding can contribute to moderating some of these risks as weapons do proliferate, but above all, it adds urgency to preventing such proliferation and to eliminating existing doctrines of deployment and use and eventually, existing stockpiles of nuclear weapons.

It is undoubtedly true that the danger of nuclear war between the US and the USSR is less today than it was at various earlier periods and it may well remain so. But that danger is reduced--not down to zero--from a level that was unacceptably high, for reasons that have long been kept secret and are not yet well understood by almost anyone. Those reasons demand urgently to be appreciated now, because they bear on the real likelihood that nuclear war could erupt between other countries in the future. Such a war would not only be vastly destructive even it remained "limited"; it could be the necessary trigger to global superpower nuclear war, long after the Cold War era had irreversibly dissolved.

c:/c2/why study

C:\crisis\madness  
~~ucdavis~~

1

April 17, 1990

Notes for talk at UC Davis, on reasons for severing the labs from UC

Waking thoughts:

--Mad logic; irrational "rationality"; the logic of madness.

Not "the rationality of irrationality," i.e., the functionality of appearing--or even being--"mad," unpredictable, impulsive, uncontrolled, so as better to intimidate, to make threats of mutually destructive behavior credible, "the political uses of madness," madness in the service of rationality...

But rather: rationality, logic, calculation, rational purposive choice process in the service of madness: e.g. the rational pursuit of mad aims (Ahab: only my ends are mad). Aims that are anti-human, anti-life, self-destructive, mutually destructive; or unbalanced, unlimited, unconstrained, not yielding to or proportioned to any other aims or values. Goals, plans, programs that ignore the longer-run or which accept enormous costs or risks in the long run (Reagan's budgets and arms policies, current environmental practices). Or which ignore impact on "third parties," or all others outside a narrow "team."

Or creative, competent, "rational" but uncritical, unquestioning or unresistant obedience to orders that are mad, illegal/criminal, harmful, wrong (Milgram, Calley) yet issue from a source with some authority.

Or carrying out of promises, agreements/contracts, threats, in circumstances where this is mad, or hurtful, wrong: perhaps, agreements, etc. that "should never have been made," or which paid no attention to the rights and welfare of third parties.  
(My interpretation of much of Milgram's results).

Or projects, goals, institutions that continue to shape behavior--which, within these guidelines is "rational"--when circumstances, perhaps in the external environment, has changed so radically that these decision premises are anachronistic, even "madly" inappropriate, wasteful, neglectful of new opportunities, even dangerous. (End of Cold War, now: note that the goals and premises may have been only relatively less mad in the former circumstances).

Madness in the service of rationality can easily evolve into this rationality in the pursuit of madness (indeed, it always entails this to some degree, almost by definition). I.e., the

C:\crisis\madness

overall performance amounts to madness, unjustifiable recklessness.

One can even suspect the "ultimate sanity" of anyone or any institution that chooses this course: even though in some cases and some circumstances, to some degree, it can be "rationalised" in the way I analysed it in "The Political Uses of Madness." That is, one might well suspect that where someone or some institution is choosing or cultivating madness, purportedly for rational purposes, there is a "higher madness" at work. The dangers of this course, of "becoming mad" in order to achieve some purposes, the dangers of being unable to "return" (Hoang Van Chi's parable of the "magic bag"--which was Ho Chi Minh's metaphor for Marxism) or of losing more control than was originally contemplated, are so great that it is, at best, a reckless choice, and may even be a rationalisation of behavior that really responds to "mad purposes."

I was, after all, using Hitler as my example. He was, indeed, "successful" by the standards of his society, and in general of international behavior, up to a point: when he fell "victim" to the momentum of his own past successes, or followed the logic of his irrationality over the threshold of feasibility, into fatal danger (the invasion of Russia: too late in the year! without taking care to enlist anti-Soviet collaboration in the occupied territories). Yet this prospect had been implicit in Hitler's (mad) "calculations" from the beginning (as had been, perhaps, the extermination of the Jews).

In the light of his recent successes, unforeseen by most of his subordinates or the rest of the world--as surprising, and disorienting, in other words, as recent events in East Europe--was his fatal decision to launch the fall invasion of Russia more reckless or mad than Johnson's decision in July 1965, which was only (much) smaller in scale and probable consequence?

Note that Hitler's reasoning, logic, premises--like those of his disciple, G. Gordon Liddy--are only a somewhat extreme form of the "old way of thinking," which dominates "reasoning" about international affairs. In domestic matters, one is more conscious of costs of this approach (including this "way of thinking"), alternatives to it, constraints on it. Marx, even before Lenin and Stalin, introduced this way of thinking to relations within the domestic society, "class war," class enemies, to be regarded with the suspicion and hatred and destructiveness appropriate to foreign enemies in an international war.

Thus, the killing and starving of the "kulaks" preceded the concentration camps and death camps in Germany. And the Allies' ("non-totalitarian" behavior, because addressed to foreign civilians) strategic bombing followed both. (Strictly speaking, the bombing--on both sides--preceded the actual death camps, the implementation of the Final Solution, though the plans for this may

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have been laid earlier (see the current controversy over Arno Mayer's thesis) and there was frontline massacre of civilians in Russia).

The "new way of thinking" extends the reasoning and aims familiar from domestic relations--aside from the role of the state, with its monopoly of legitimate violence--into international relations, even in the absence of an authoritative overriding state or system of international legal institutions or federal system. The seeking of collaboration, consideration of others' rights and welfare, eschewing violence and the threat of violence, seeking and relying on processes other than violence to resolve disputes, unilateral and mutual disarmament, especially of "offensive" weapons.

--Thus, behavior that appears "impulsive" may respond to an implicit logic, unconsciously carried out very quickly in a "crisis," a process of reasoning and "selection" of response. Yet, for the same reasons that there "is no time" for more explicit reasoning, there may be no time to "consult" the "usual" centers of decision and authority: the selection is carried out, in an individual, in different parts of the nervous system, perhaps differing in some values and reflexes and constraints from the "higher centers." (

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\end\KKLW

Program on origins and end of CW, on Sunday April 22, 1990 (Earth day) on KKLW, American Public Radio Network, CBC series on The Gorbachev Revolution, FM 91.7: Arbatov, Trofimenko, Plekhanov, Berezhkov...

--Desire for world of law, World Court, Bretton Woods, cooperation, in US/FDR and Stalin. FDR offered \$10 billion in 1944 to SU for reconstruction; Berezhkov thinks this could have made a big difference; Stalin might have allowed economic freedom in East Europe as in Finland.

--"One effect of living in a cave all your life, as the Sovs have, is that you see very clearly when you come out into the light. ...return to hopes of UN, world law, of 1945 (Arbatov)...

--Game was over in SU with drop in oil prices; Brezhnev had been financing inefficient system with oil and gas sales to the West; with this over, it was necessary to think of reform.

--At this point, New Thinking was available from think tanks. No civilian consultants in the West were thinking about "abolishing nuclear weapons, ending alliances, cooperating with East"; they had all been coopted into the MIC (!). But in the SU, strategic analysis had been jealously guarded within military circles; so when civilians started to think about these things, they were not tainted by commitments to the status quo. (!)

--In 1987, Gorbachev went to Prague and rejected the Brezhnev Doctrine; he was telling the leaders of East European regimes that SU would no longer protect them from their own people. ((Analysts in Moscow may have expected these leaders to begin adjusting rapidly, as in Moscow, to radically new conditions; to bend, coopt, adapt...but they didn't. They snapped...))

He was also rejecting the ideological element in foreign policy. Institute USA analyst: It is inconceivable that Sov troops would fight abroad for socialism; no one over here knows what socialism is, apart from Stalinist socialism; what is "real socialism"?

--Earlier: The Sov tanks were a threat, to counterbalance US nuclear monopoly, holding West Europe hostage. East Europe was a buffer zone. Later, when Sovs had nuclear weapons... (?) But CW fed on itself...

--When Stalin died, East Europe (Germany; Poland?) erupted immediately; but new leaders weren't ready to dismantle system so fast (see Gorbachev and Lithuania, Azerbaijan!]; put it down with tanks.

Likewise, when word of Khrushchev's secret speech denouncing Stalin reached Hungary, Hungary revolted. (!) (Again, like 1989, glasnost! POTENTIAL OF PENTAGON PAPERS?! POTENTIAL IF CARTER'S STUDY OF US/IRAN RELATIONS HAD BEEN RELEASED? OR OF CENTRAL AMERICA RELATIONS? NOTE THE SOCIETAL IGNORANCE OF NIXON'S STRATEGY IN VN--OR IN MIDDLE EAST--IN ABSENCE OF PENTAGON PAPERS OF 70'S. OR INDONESIA; CHILE (THAT IS SOMEWHAT KNOWN FROM CHURCH REPORT);

Again, K put this down with tanks; CW "confirmed"; and in SU too, the enmity of the West served to rationalise for Sovs the need for CW vigilance (Henry Trofimenko).

--Meanwhile, as SU prepares to accept German reunification--"which really doesn't pose any military threat to SU"--they must deal with fact that for 40 years, Soviet TV and mass media have almost daily presented Germany as a fascist state, posing a real threat; now public must be persuaded that it is not.

[In SU: this time, talk to Trofimenko; review papers by Kortunov, etc., e.g. in New Times; check who will be in States in May, to see;; see K...; when is Mikoyan coming?

Get FAX? Prepare to take Compaq (papers? Current? Cords?)

Arrange either with Mikoyan, or Borovik; or Arbatov/Plekhanov: to talk to Dobrynin, Volkogonov, Akhromeyev; Alexiev? Khrushchev; on CII. Anatoly Gromyko? Shakhnazarov?

Send pictures to Mikoyan.

Talk to von Hippel, on Velikhov proposal (network).

As on CII: history of VN; Berlin! ME crises; FU threats. (Will SU military clam up, now that their influence is increasing? )

Talk to Posner; Yeltsin?

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KKLW? The Gorbachev Revolution

"Gwynn Dyer"

- I. U.S. FU Policy
  - A. NATO
  - B. UN Resolutions
  - C. Carter, 1977
  - D. Rejection of SU example, 1982
- II. Preventive War
  - A. Ike in '53
  - B. NSC-100
  - C. Ike-Dulles
  - D. JCS, 1945-
- III. Preemptive Attack
- IV. Risks to Allies
  - A. Ike/Japan
  - B. JFK: Berlin/Turkey
- V. Quemoy Crises
  - A. 1955
  - B. 1958
- VI. Cuban Crises
  - A. 1961
  - B. 1962
- VII. Berlin Crises (and German rearmament)
- VIII. VN: '64 Nucs/On Bombing Propensity of US
- IX. N-Bomb
- X. Morality/No Limits/"By Any Means Necessary"
  - A. Escalation
  - B. Coercion (torture)
  - C. Obedience
  - D. Massacre
- XI. Secrecy, Clearances, and Lies
  - A. And CII
  - B. In VN
  - C. US "Atrocities"
- XII. Presidents and Threats
  - A. Were they "bluffing?"

- B. Could they control?
- C. What were the effects?

XIII. Milgram/Kelman: "No Choice

- A. Is arms race really tied to threats?
- B. Are Presidents all fully "aboard"?
  - 1. Re use of threats
  - 2. Re arms build-up

XIV. Ironies of approach (Coalition): "To reject A, accept B."

XV. What Are the Real Effects of Threats?

XVI. Do Threats Work?

XVII. Soviet Threats

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PROGRAM .1	5383	01/01/80 00:39	PROGRAM .2	21182	01/01/80 04:44	
PROGRAM .3	7839	01/01/80 00:31	PROJECT .CPS	2910	01/01/80 05:37	
PROPOSAL.	9016	01/01/80 02:09	PROPOSAL.C2	28319	01/01/80 14:41	
PROPOSAL.C21	23629	01/01/80 08:41	PROPOSAL.C22	56615	01/01/80 00:33	
PROPOSAL.C23	70093	01/01/80 01:25	PROPOSAL.CII	64703	01/01/80 01:53	
RUSHDIE	17733	01/01/80 04:23	SECRECY .	20824	01/01/80 01:15	
SECRETS .	29247	01/01/80 07:06	SNF .	15974	01/01/80 05:52	
THREATS .	13183	01/01/80 05:48	WARTYPE .	9223	01/01/80 02:33	
WHYSTUDY.	5671	01/01/80 03:27	WRITING .	9530	01/01/80 04:23	

Psychosocial Sources of Risk in Nuclear Crises  
Project Director: Daniel Ellsberg, Ph. D.

This project focusses on three hidden sources of risk in the nuclear era. One is the secret readiness of men in power to gamble with catastrophe: to choose courses predicted by advisors to have a disproportionate risk of moral and political disaster, rather than to accept a limited, humiliating personal failure. The second is the secret readiness of subordinates, both high and low, obediently to carry out policies they perceive to be not only unnecessary or hopeless but reckless or disastrous and perhaps immoral. Third is the tendency of both leaders and advisors to underestimate the danger of loss of control: of operations, decisions, costs, risks and events.

A particular case study is the Cuban Missile Crisis. An unprecedented amount of data has recently become available on all three sides of this episode, US, Soviet and Cuban, which is to be integrated with hitherto-unrevealed findings drawn from Dr. Ellsberg's own participation in the crisis and his later high-level official study of it, and from his governmental experience as participant in and official analyst of other international crises ranging from Suez and Berlin to the escalation of the Vietnam War under Johnson and Nixon: experience that led to the focus on the three psychosocial dimensions above. .

Recent revolutionary changes in East Europe and in Soviet policy, together with the "new way of thinking" from which these changes flowed, will be analyzed for the new hope they offer of possible transformation of the moral, political and psychosocial international system that has recurrently produced such crises, confrontation and risk.

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working notes, sequel to version of proposal sent to MBG on June 29

new approach:

- 1) show parallel between SU actions and US/NATO, not to legitimize the former or make it seem safe, but
  - a) to make it understandable;
  - b) make the US/NATO approach comprehensible in new ways
  - c) illuminate effects, functions of both
- d) de-legitimize both, show risks and immorality and madness (specifically, reliance on madness--of leaders or of subordinates, and loss of control): where the threat was not urgent and there were alternatives.

Thus: A) K strategy in Cuba imitated US strategy in NATO;

(B) (Not mentioned earlier): K strategy in Cuba particularly imitated US strategy in TW outside Europe, in defending distant interests with FU: even when the interests weren't so great, but when, compared to NATO, there was little chance of adequate non-nuclear intervention).

is that:  
convinces US  
Quincy  
TW + Eur FU  
strategies.

(C) US strategy in NATO today with SNF imitates K strategy in Cuba: especially in emphasis on local forces, vulnerable to attack and over-running and requiring early FU for their functioning (like N-warheads; and PII, aimed at decap; or XRL); thus requiring an image of delegated decentralized control to be deterrent at all; this inhibiting strong measures to prevent decentralization; which are necessary if inherent possibility of unauthorized action is to be precluded. I.e., a "pretense" is needed; and this pretense is accompanied by some reality (Vonnegut).

SFIF does  
deter;  
and is really  
(if deterrence  
fails it is a  
commitment, not a  
bluff! kill  
Doanly  
Machin; on  
into ON, require  
to false alarm  
Doesn't  
allow for:  
1) special  
crises, prob  
information;  
4) new alternatives  
2) change of  
mind  
3) bluff

2. New format: Expand on each of three "reasons" for study.

(a) Near-miss (show how war could have developed despite inhibitions so strong as to make JFK strategy a conscious bluff, new awareness of which has led JFK school, and McN and McG, to conclude there was almost no chance of war)

There was less learning--so as to reduce risk--than Blight supposes, either during crisis (inhibitions about attack, and willingness to trade, showed up at outset of crisis)...and were still not enough to prevent Ultimatum; or after crisis: Brezhnev buildup and US buildups did not reduce the risk of war, or show real learning from the crisis, except a plausible but sinister kind! It was not just that the lessons were lost (Burlatsky) but that the new leaders drew different, plausible but wrong dangerous lessons!

Moreover, McNamara's "Law" was not learned by him during Cuba II--how could it have been? Or we wouldn't have had Vietnam (maybe).

Thus, notion that risk was low in Cuba II, and got even lower later, partly because of Cuba II, are both mistaken: dangerously misleading lessons.

Approach of my study: What could have happened? How close; what would have had to change to produce explosion? (or to avoid altogether)? (e.g., if Cubans hadn't started firing...; or if K hadn't reacted so fast...) see notes

Consider why no such investigation so far: unlike TMI... (see notes of 1 July)

(b) Current interpretations are wrong, often dangerously so. GIVE EXAMPLES:

1) Why was there a crisis? Initial reactions; consideration of alternatives.

2) Alternative, early and late, of trade of Turkish missiles (new data available, but failure to interpret it properly (unwillingness to criticise JFK: to make him dovish "too early," as opposed to "learning" from crisis, since this raises question as to "was crisis necessary?" or "was it a bluff?" or to criticise EXCOMM members for lying all these years? I do't know entirely.) Continued lies, e.g. of McNamara on WGBH. (How does McG deal with this?)

3) With new data on McN and JFK unwillingness to attack, and their willingness to trade Turkish missiles (note reasonableness of this!) and their expectation of this: all this from first or second day of secret crisis: Hypothesis of Bluff Strategy.

4) Yet note: this does not mean, as most conclude, that risk was very low, or negligible. See earlier account, under near-miss, of how it might have come about. (NYT)

5) see 3): bluff strategy puts in new light quotes about risks by JFK, to Sorensen or to RFK: could be (realistic) rationale for determination not to go to war. Yet war was possible; they did risk it; and note their willingness to risk.

See Rusk fear after Oct 22 speech; McNamara fear on Oct 27; blockade, and JFK fear reported by RFK; Nitze quote to hsr; realistic fear by Pres and McN of SU reaction to airstrike (see Mikoyan and Burlatsky; their fears may have been exaggerated, but

confidence of Lemay, etc. that there would be no response was at least as far off; truth in between; see Nitze).

6) ? Should I include: Why did K think he could get away with it? Or, briefer than present version?

7) New data on US plans against Cuba: a subject still lied about; and insufficiently understood. (Like, SU plans for Berlin).

(8) Note ;not for here, probably, but SU concerns about Berlin, stemming from concern for nuclear weapons in Germany, show another link to today's SNF (and earlier PII/CM issue; see Int Sec article proposing to turn over INF to Germans! And rationale for this.

US/NATO strategy is an elaborate substitute, in terms of defense against a Soviet threat, for German weapons (Which might have actually brought on the Soviet pressures or attack that NATO is meant to avoid; or encouraged German intervention, and thus Soviet counterattack...); but it is deterrent, since the Sixties, in much the same way that German weapons would be deterrent: by threatening loss of control of weapons to subordinates, in this case junior American officers, rather than posing an uncontrolled or "irrational" action by Germans.

(Perhaps I have underestimated the importance of this in past. I have stressed the "stability of instability" in the construction of a preemptive motive, this still presuming a "rational" choice at highest levels (military if not civilian: see Steinbrunner, which is also posed in terms of loss of -- civilian--control, as effectively happened in Russia and Germany prior to WWI).

But a different basis for "credible" FU or escalation is posed by physical deployment that poses loss of high-level control:

--SNF

--PII, GLCMs

--Lack of PALs on Navy ships

--Lack of PALs on submarines

--presence of nuclear weapons in Korea

--presence of nuclear weapons with RDF (see Lebanon, 1957; and Cuba II!)

--Presence of Navy ships in Persian Gulf.

--Risks actually run in Falklands: subs, ASW.

--Battleships at risk off Lebanon, 1983.

--Risks of accidents, unauthorized actions: Arkin; Kunsan...false alarms, looseness...

--SDI: e.g., XRL problem; ASAT...

Thus, vulnerability increases credibility, both at low levels (insubordination, initiative; motive of revenge, use or lose, protect own units) and high levels (preemption, damage-limiting, use or lose)

Where FU is the issue, especially against a nuclear opponent, forward-basing may be the tactic of choice. (e.g., Arab states against Israel? But Israel probably wouldn't be deterred from attacking...taking a chance!)

### 3) Policy implications;

a) Expand on: NATO FU strategy. Peculiarities of K approach in Cuba, specifically like SNF: local weapons. (Not just like FU threat in TW cases, which did not, on the whole, depend on local weapons! Why not? Hyp: because against non-nuclear opponent, you don't rely on threat of loss of control; nor do you do so to threaten offensively to break a stalemate. We could have used this approach on Quemoy, as we did on Taiwan, with Matadors? But presumably it would have scared the US public too much. It could have been used at Dienbienphu; (suitable weapons not ready yet for Chosin Reservoir?!); could have been used at Khe Sanh, but this would have scared both LBJ and US public, and perhaps not served Westy's hopes, which may have been to get an attack that would lead to use of nucs, rather than to deter an attack by making nuc use look highly likely.

Perhaps I should emphasize this analogy from start: not just use of FU strategy...but threat of loss of control, vs. nuclear-armed opponent:

And make point: This is the heart of current NATO strategy, in age of parity: PII bolstered it, and with PII gone, SNF embodies it.

b) World-wide FU threat relies on threat in Europe: remove latter, by changing conventional postures and removing SNF, and you clearly reduce reliance on, necessity for, FU threat; even if it isn't withdrawn formally in Europe, the case for NFU is clearly stronger, and in this context, the case for explicit NFU outside Europe is greatly strengthened. Again, even if explicit NFU is not made national policy, it would no longer be fatal or unthinkable for the Democrats to adopt it as national policy, no

longer necessary for Party leadership to resist a grassroots push for it; and a strong case could be made for removing the postural basis for "highly credible, early" first-use by removing nuclears from Navy and overseas bases.

c) But then, basis for first-strike "modernization" is eliminated: the strategic arms race. Goal of bilateral "restricted deterrence," minimum stable deterrent only..

d) Real anti-proliferation policy: all above as necessary condition. Including efforts to stigmatize TW strategies equal to CUBA II or SNF: FU threats in general, loose controls...

e) All this in context of CANDOR.

f) All this in spirit of mutual, coordinated reductions-- planning for which should be the basis of US thinking and research. Likewise, mutual, coordinated investigation and research: CANDOR! Current study of Cuba II as the prototype for this...actually happening! (Need trips to SU, and Cuba). Study other FU cases on same basis: LEARN FROM NEAR-MISSES! Stop ignoring them, or examining them only to deprecate the risk they might have led to war (a trait both of hawk and of "dove" analyses, so far!)

The latter aspect, as with McGeorge Bundy and McNamara, had baffled me till I noticed their motive of defensiveness about their own past involvement in such threats, or bluffs. As for Halperin, Paine, York: they seem rather to want to deprecate possible usefulness of such threats--rather than to stress risk-- perhaps because they don't want to seem to concede any rational purpose to the hawks, or possible utility. Bundy can't totally ignore the utility, since he was actually involved in such threats, however reluctantly; but he can stress that they were bluffs, and not risky.

g) Focus on the risk of war--and the morality of taking such risks, hence making such threats (enlighten people on the risks of threats, even bluffs, "pretense"...by examining crises, especially Cuba II!)

h) Focus on the risks of Command and Control: take these, and delegation problem, looseness in general, seriously at last; Congressional investigation...rather than accept argument that it is necessary to keep the enemy guessing about this; and our allies, where weapons are based. Recognize relation of this lack of candor to proliferation problem (underestimation of the risks of possession).

[Compaq]

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5

experience and study of escalation in Vietnam, as well as on information that has been newly revealed in the last two years.

In October 1962 I participated in the high-level staffwork of the Cuban Missile Crisis, serving on two of the three Working Groups reporting to the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (ExComm).

I went into that crisis as a specialist in nuclear war planning--I had drafted the Kennedy Administration's top secret guidance for the general nuclear war plans that became operational that year--and an expert on the procedures by which the execution of those plans might be ordered, either with or--as I had discovered to be possible-- without the immediate authorization of the President.

I came out of the crisis feeling I had experienced the most likely way a thermonuclear war would come to pass, if it ever did. The way deterrence on both sides could fail. The way in which the plans and procedures I had studied and helped design might actually come to be acted out. A dress rehearsal for nuclear catastrophe, on the scale of a million Hiroshimas.

I determined to study that episode, and any others like it, with the best official access to information that could be achieved, to discover the faults in a system that had let us come this far along the path to a war that, surely, neither side had earlier intended or desired.

This does not mean that I set out to examine this incident --when I had found sponsorship for such a study within the government a year later--with the presupposition that nuclear war had been very close, highly probable, or missed by a very narrow margin. On the contrary, I had believed during the height of the crisis--just as many authorities do today--that the actual probability of a major war, let alone a nuclear war, erupting momentarily was extremely low.

As the blockade had tightened on Cuba, I thought then--like certain "hawks" then and now--that Khrushchev, vastly outgunned both in the Caribbean and in strategic nuclear arms, "had" to back down and could be counted on to do so, almost surely before the threshold of hot war was crossed.

Looking back just a few years later--after studying crises including this one, then participating in several that took us to war--I came to feel I had been very mistaken.

In 1964 I spent over six months studying this and other nuclear crises with interdepartmental access to highly-classified information on this and other nuclear crises that was then virtually unprecedented and may still be so today. A sponsoring

committee of officials at the deputy secretary level in State, Defense, CIA and the Staff Directorate of the Joint Chiefs of Staff assured me access to closely-held documentation in each of their respective agencies.

As I put together information some of which the highest officials had not known at the time and no one had seen whole before, it began to be clear that the overall chance of the military equivalent of a nuclear "meltdown"--without being close to certain or even as likely as not--had been significantly greater than I had supposed.

To my surprise, I discovered this inference of a "near miss" to be comparably strong in the case of at least one earlier episode, the Quemoy Crisis of 1957, which was not commonly regarded by the public or scholars to have been a nuclear crisis. (In more recent research, I have uncovered a number of other instances: see my Introduction to Protest and Survive, attached).

Moreover, in looking at a larger number of crises, not all of which had a nuclear dimension, I found patterns and phenomena of decisionmaking in crises--including psychological reactions to events threatening humiliation, and failures in understanding, communication and in control of forces--that suggested that the potential danger in Cuba or Quemoy was not peculiar to the particular personalities involved nor their particular strategic context.

After reporting orally my major findings to the committee of departmental planners in the fall of 1964, I accepted an invitation that came at that time to continue my study of crisis decision-making from even further inside, as a highest-level civil servant (GS-18) serving as Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs) observing, by participating in, the secret escalation of US intervention in Vietnam.

My preoccupation with Vietnam turned out to last 11 years. That included two years as a field observer for the Embassy in Vietnam, two years helping write and analysing lessons from the top secret history of our decision-making (the Pentagon Papers) and six years working to end our involvement, in particular by revealing what I knew about it.

What I learned of crises and hot war in that time--11 years watching vastly outgunned Vietnamese and hopelessly stalemated Americans both refusing to back down, instead crossing threshold after threshold of escalating violence--further confirmed what I had discovered in my crisis study of 1964:

We had come much closer to stumbling into a major war in 1962 than I had realized at the time, or most other analysts recognize now. And it could happen again.

One major body of evidence leading to this conclusion--one of several lines of argument I will present in this study--was first revealed publicly by me in an Op-Ed piece in the New York Times on the 25th anniversary of the crisis. Rather than summarize that brief essay, which is already very condensed, I will reproduce it here:

[Compag]

1

C-12/proposal, §2a

25 June 1989  
CII proposal

The existential challenge of our time is that although large-scale thermonuclear war is acknowledged by all to be the ultimate catastrophe and to be unthinkable, it has not been made impossible.

Quite the contrary: enormously expensive and highly organized preparations are made each year and programmed for years in the future to alert the two superpowers to evidence of events that would supposedly warrant deliberately initiating it, and in those circumstances to executing warplans, elaborated years in advance, for waging thermonuclear war and attempting, despite all disclaimers, to "win" it.

Other catastrophes loom, lesser only by comparison with this one: global warming, ozone depletion. (They threaten enormous disruption and loss of life: but not the end of organized life in the Northern Hemisphere or the possible extinction of life on earth). They differ in resulting from the unorganized activity of millions of institutions and individuals in their daily affairs. The preparations for thermonuclear war are highly planned and hierarchically organized.

And the war itself can be set in motion by a single individual: the political leader of the US or the Soviet Union. Or if we take into account the possibility of catalytic action, initiatives, authorized or not, by subordinates in the chain of nuclear command or by leaders or subordinates in lesser nuclear states that could set off the nuclear machinery of the two superpowers, the number of individuals who might trigger a large-scale exchange is in the hundreds or thousands.

For a number of years I have been haunted by the thought: I live in a society that is preparing a catastrophe.

What do we mean by "possible"? Many who acknowledge that the probability that this system, potentially explosive by design, will actually explode is greater than zero, still think of this probability as extremely low, on the order of estimates that reigned for many years for the probability of a core meltdown in a nuclear reactor: say, 1/1000,000,000,000.... Acceptably low. Those, of course, are the estimates that used to be made, before Three Mile Island and Chernobyl.

Those estimates were of the same order as estimates of the chance of a failure of an aerospace shuttle flight, before the Challenger explosion. Or estimates by the oil industry of a

catastrophic oil spill in the Alaskan Sound, before the Exxon Valdez.

The Cuban Missile Crisis was the practical equivalent to Three Mile Island: not the feared, ultimate catastrophe--indeed, only one person died--but a dress rehearsal for it, a near-miss. Yet this event did not lead to an urgent reconsideration or reevaluation upward of the real risks of nuclear war (despite extreme, probably exaggerated anxiety among the public in the US and much of the rest of the world during the crisis itself).

[Why not? --Like Hiroshima, the crisis was associated with a great American victory that immediately followed it: the success overshadowed and seemed to justify the preceding decisions.

--Information on the decision-making preceding and during the crisis--again, like Hiroshima but unlike TMI and the other disasters--was classified and remained highly secret for a generation.

--Thus, for both the above reasons, there was no public investigation (unlike, say, Pearl Harbor or the MacArthur hearings).

--There was almost no study of the incident and its risks even within the government: except for mine, there was only the WSEG study (extremely closely held within the JCS, even from the SecDef); and the three studies in CIA focussing on the intelligence failure).

--High-level accounts did emerge in the '60's which appeared both comprehensive and reassuring: highly laudatory, in particular, of the President's decision-making (by his official historian, his speech-writer, and his brother). In retrospect these accounts have proven extremely inadequate and misleading, in some respects deliberately so. But even some of the most recent accounts--still, by the President's Assistant for National Security, and by scholars at the Kennedy School, who have accepted too credulously assertions by Kennedy's officials--retain this tone of reassurance, and in particular, high appreciation of the President's role and command of events.

According to these interpretations, the public's fears at the time--and in the more recent accounts, even the President's reported concerns--were greatly overwrought.

--Much emphasis has been put on the way the international system has changed since then--in part, as the result of the crisis--in ways that make a replay unlikely and, if it occurred, less dangerous.

I was myself a second-level participant in the latter stage of the crisis--serving on working-groups staffing the ExComm in the last six of the "thirteen days." My own estimate at the time of the risk that the crisis would explode in large-scale nuclear war was, unlike the public's (and, I later learned, my bosses') estimate, extremely low: as I now see it, very much too low. But I did think then that I had experienced the way in which thermonuclear war would come about, if it ever did. This was in great contrast to the model of war initiation that had preoccupied me for several previous years as a RAND employee and consultant to the Secretary of Defense and White House, during which I had drafted the official Kennedy guidance for the war plans for general nuclear war.

That had focussed primarily on the possibility of a Soviet surprise nuclear attack on the US: secondarily, on war arising from a deliberate Soviet decision to blockade Berlin or to invade Western Europe. In the fall of 1961 I had learned that the Soviets had not made the effort we had supposed to acquire an ICBM force remotely capable of surprise attack; and when the US revealed to the Soviets our new awareness of this reality--in a speech I myself proposed and drafted--the Berlin crisis of that year appeared to subside.

Yet one year later the Cuban Missile Crisis recalled me to an awareness that nuclear war was, nevertheless, still possible, by a route different from what I and my colleagues had earlier supposed: a path of miscalculations on both sides, actions unforeseen much earlier by either, ill-understood in their effects by the actor, in their intent by its opponent and in their interaction by both, choices by each that an informed observer could properly judge reckless and misguided, defining together a course toward war like that which determined the outbreak of World War I.

I determined to study this episode with the best access to information that could be achieved, to discover the faults in a system that had permitted us to come this close to a war that, surely, neither side had earlier intended or desired.

For over six months in 1964 I did arrange to study this and related crises, with high-level access that had little precedent. [Before I could write out a report of my findings, I was invited to join the government in a role that, I anticipated correctly, would let me observe from the inside a comparable process: the escalation of our intervention in Vietnam. My initial desire simply to add to my understanding drew me into a ten-year involvement, first as an accomplice then as a resister, in a tragic and criminal war.] Much of the most relevant information I gained has not yet ever been released elsewhere, over a quarter-century later. In a number of respects it drastically affects "lessons" that have been drawn as recently as this year: it is clearly time that this information become more generally available.

Yet it is also clear that this information, and my own interpretations, are not the last word. Other information that has lately begun to surface, wholly unknown to me--and most other participants and analysts--at the time has a bearing that strongly modifies my own prior understanding of events. It points toward the existence of other data that are still undisclosed and about which major participants are still lying, presumably to conceal...something. We are now, I would guess, in the middle of our efforts to understand this crisis: no longer at the beginning, but not yet near the end.

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In October 1962 I participated in the high-level staffwork of the crisis, serving on two of the three Working Groups reporting to the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (ExComm).

I went into that crisis as an expert on planning for general nuclear war--I had drafted the Kennedy Administration top secret guidance for the operational plans for general war that went into effect that year--and on the procedures by which the execution of those plans might be ordered, either with or--as I discovered to be possible-- without immediate authorisation by the President.

I came out of the crisis feeling I had experienced the way in which the plans and procedures I had studied and helped design might actually come to be acted on. The way deterrence on both sides could fail. The most likely way a thermonuclear war would come to pass.

I determined to study that episode with the best access to information that could be achieved, to discover the faults in a system that had let us come this far along the path to a war that, surely, neither side had earlier intended or desired.

In 1964 I spent over six months studying this and other nuclear crises with virtually unprecedented interdepartmental access to highly-classified information. A sponsoring committee of officials at the deputy secretary level in State, Defense, CIA and the Staff Directorate of the Joint Chiefs of Staff assured me access to closely-held documentation in each of their respective agencies.

After reporting orally my major findings to that committee, I accepted an invitation, in effect, to continue my study of crisis decision-making from even further inside, as a highest-level civil servant (GS-18) serving as Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs) observing, by participating in, the secret escalation of US intervention in Vietnam.

What I learned of crises and hot war in the next 11 years-- including two years as a field observer for the Embassy in Vietnam, two years helping write and analysing lessons from the top secret history of our decision-making (the Pentagon Papers) and six years working to end our involvement, in particular by revealing what I knew about it--further confirmed what I had discovered in my crisis study of 1964: that we had come much closer to stumbling into a major war in 1962 than I myself had realized at the time.

Few have ever disagreed with the judgment that the Cuban Missile Crisis was the most dangerous episode of the nuclear era. But just how dangerous was it? "Not very," is the emerging consensus of specialists in the subject, who proceed to draw the related conclusion that the risks of the era as a whole have been, in reality, low and getting steadily lower. I believe these experts are wrong on both counts, dangerously so.

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It is true that recent testimony by Secretary McNamara reveals that both he and President Kennedy, desperately anxious to avoid nuclear war, were secretly determined to avoid an air attack or invasion of Cuba that might bring it about, in contrast to their official stance within the ExComm discussions.

That and other new evidence unknown to me in 1962 and 1964 has great bearing on my understanding of the crisis, but it does not change my basic finding. If anything, it makes it more dramatic, and more relevant to present and future circumstances.

Contrary to their wishes and expectations, and in ways they neither controlled nor were aware of at the time, they almost got the war they were determined to avoid. And it could well have had the nuclear consequences they feared.

We came as close to thermonuclear war in 1962, I believe, as Three Mile Island or Chernobyl came to a core meltdown. Far closer, that is to say, than any experts had earlier imagined possible, or in this case, than most experts now recognize. Unacceptably close.

I believe that the same experts correspondingly underestimate the actual risks in other nuclear crises, both past and easily-imaginable future ones. By the same token, they fail to recognize either the urgency or the most relevant opportunities to reduce such risks.

It is clearly time for me to contribute to the ongoing active discussion of the Cuban Missile Crisis and the nuclear era as a whole the data from my earlier official, classified study--most of which has still not become publicly available elsewhere--that leads me to these conclusions

Some bodies of data evidently not drawn upon by any other published research:

--Comprehensive notes of most ExComm meetings (including several for which no transcript or summary exists) by a participant.

--Interview data from 1964 on the initial reactions, prior to the first ExComm meeting (thus, prior to hearing the President's views) to the presence of the missiles and the appropriate US response. Like the notes above, these sharply contradict the universal assertion in the literature that "no one was for doing nothing" and that nearly all, or even a majority, of the ExComm members initially assumed that a military response was inevitable.

--Interview and documentary data on the extraordinary and unprecedented secrecy restrictions--even within the intelligence community--imposed by President Kennedy in the fall of 1962 on any evidence of offensive weapons on Cuba. (These had the ironic effect of delaying his own awareness of the possible presence of the

missiles).

Various motives can be conjectured, but this and other evidence bears on Khrushchev's possible hopes for success with his gambit: he may have expected, not entirely unrealistically, that Kennedy would seek to keep less-than-conclusive evidence suggesting deployment secret in the pre-election period. (In the absence of any published allusions to the special secrecy system, this hypothesis has not been considered elsewhere).

--Policy planning analysis, alluded to elsewhere but apparently not available to other researchers, for the NSC on the implications of possible Soviet missiles in Cuba, as early as August, 1962.

--Evidence unknown during the crisis, the implications of which have been neglected by researchers until recently, that neither the firing of a Soviet surface-to-air missiles at Major Anderson's U-2, nor the Cuban antiaircraft firing at low-level reconnaissance planes--continuation of which would almost certainly have led to US air attacks on Cuba--were under Khrushchev's control. (See summary in my New York Times Op-Ed piece, October 31, 1987, attached).

--Documentary evidence on the strong concern by President Kennedy and Secretary McNamara that Turkish missiles with American nuclear warheads might be fired, under Soviet attack, without the American authorisation formally required; and their efforts to prevent this. (This corresponds to their recently-reported fears of unauthorized action by Soviet missile officers on Cuba. It is the apparent basis of the widely-held erroneous belief that Kennedy had ordered the Turkish missiles removed, prior to the conclusion of the crisis).

June 27, 1989

ENDING THE ARMS RACE, CREATING A JUST SOCIETY, SAVING THE EARTH...

I once spent ten years trying to end a war: after I had spent a year helping to make it bigger, as my job, against my better judgment.

For four of the ten years I tried to end it gracefully, from the point of view of the executive branch: with least harm to US foreign policy, or to the administration, the Democratic Party, my ability to stay in the government or to stay out of jail. (I did risk my life a good deal).

For the next six years I dropped those conditions. I tried to end the war any way I could: without being violent or untruthful. I didn't believe violence would help end the war, I thought it would help the administration prolong it (and I still think that was right). And I wasn't willing to be violent anyway, or to be untruthful; I'd seen and done too much of both of those in the government, I'd seen the effects, and I never wanted to do either again.

For the last 14 years, since that war was ended, I've tried to end the nuclear arms race: in part, by the same tactics.

So over the last quarter-century I've gained a little experience in what works in such efforts, and a lot of experience of what doesn't work, at least not in the short run: a fairly long short run.

One conclusion is this. Moral arguments don't go very far by themselves. Yet they may well be indispensable. I think they are. But that means you can't omit to press other reasons as well.

In fact, no single-dimensional appeal does the job by itself, even with the best audience for it: not cost, or risk, or politics, or personal psychology (e.g., anti-machismo, feminism, new gender models), or legality, or morality...though most activists do deliberately limit their argument to one or another of those considerations.

They think that to combine two or more of them contradicts or dilutes their argument, or loses part of the constituency they want. And that is partly true.

But I suspect, from some experience, that it is hard to be effective--in resistance against society's traditions or institutions or inertia and especially its leadership--if you omit any one of those considerations that you can align with your cause. Two are better than one, and your best chance is if you can combine most or all, despite all psychological resistances.

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When the Cuban Missile Crisis is adequately understood, it will be as implausible to say that the probability of nuclear war is negligibly or acceptably low "because no one wants it to happen--and rational leaders are careful" as to say the same thing about another Chernobyl disaster or a core meltdown.

More practically, it should appear unacceptable to defend any borders by the threat of losing control of nuclear weapons under any circumstances whatever: which rules out anything close to present US strategy in Western Europe or South Korea, and the deterrence policies of a number of lesser nuclear states.

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the message from the hands of the man in the car, and ran up the steps to broadcast it immediately.")

The President's bluffs--and Khrushchev's, too--came close to exploding. Contrary to their wishes and expectations, and in ways they neither controlled nor were aware of at the time, Kennedy and McNamara might well have found themselves, a few hours after Robert Kennedy's threats to Dobrynin, taking the actions and getting the war they were determined to avoid. And it could well have had the nuclear consequences they feared.

In his recent account of the nuclear era, Danger and Survival, McGeorge Bundy concludes of the Cuban Missile Crisis that the risks have often been overestimated, because both Kennedy and Khrushchev were "determined not to let matters spin out of control through any decision of his own," and "the largest single factor that might have led to nuclear war--the readiness of one leader or the other to regard that outcome as remotely acceptable--simply did not exist in October 1962." (p. 453).

But he goes on further to argue that "the risk was small, given the prudence and the unchallenged final control of the two leaders" (p. 461: Bundy suggests that the risk may have been around 1 in 100). (Unaccountably, publishing in late 1988, Bundy shows no more awareness of the compelling evidence of Khrushchev's lack of control over the Soviet shootdown of the U-2 or over Castro's anti-aircraft fire--or of the dangers of Kennedy's warnings and commitments made in ignorance of this possibility--than he or his colleagues exhibited in 1962.)

When the Cuban Missile Crisis is adequately understood, I would say, it is as implausible to argue that the risk of nuclear war in that episode--or any future, comparable event--can be taken to be small for the reasons Bundy gives as to say the same thing about the Chernobyl disaster or a possible core meltdown.

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#### What Remains to be Learned?

It is clearly time for me to contribute to the ongoing active discussion of the Cuban Missile Crisis and of the nuclear era as a whole by writing up and disseminating the relevant data from my earlier official, classified study, along with my most recent hypotheses, speculations and conclusions reflecting both the new and the old information. I plan to spend at least the next several months doing this--with articles, research memoranda and a book as the eventual product--and I invite support for this effort.

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What I proposed--and what I plan to bring up to date and publish now--is the type of analysis that is sometimes brought to bear on a "near miss" in the field of aircraft collisions, nuclear reactor malfunctions, oil spills, toxic emissions or space shuttle breakdowns.

This calls for looking very closely not only at what happened and how and why it happened, in terms of process and motives, but also at "what almost happened, what could have happened," "how it might have turned out worse, or very differently," what would have had to happen to bring about a fullscale catastrophe or, on the other hand, to have prevented the system from coming anywhere nearly so close to disaster. The aim of disciplined speculation exploring unpleasant "might have beens" surrounding such an anxiety-provoking and potentially catastrophic event is, of course, precisely to learn how to avoid worse in the future.

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What appears, to some, to contradict this conclusion is recent testimony by former Secretary of Defense McNamara revealing that both he and President Kennedy, desperately anxious to avoid nuclear war, were secretly determined to avoid at all costs an air attack or invasion of Cuba that might bring it about, in contrast to their official stance within the ExComm discussions. I n particular, President Kennedy seems clearly to have been ready--contrary to all accounts published prior to 1987--to accept a public trade, the mutual withdrawal of US warheads in Turkey along with Soviet missiles in Cuba, if necessary rather than to carry out the air strike or invasion he was ostentatiously preparing. I short, though no one else seems to have drawn the blunt inference, both the threat implicit in these preparations and Robert Kennedy's explicit ultimatum to Ambassador Dobrynin on the night of October 27 threatening an air strike in 48 hours and rejecting any possibility of a public trade appear to have been, in the eyes of the President, enormous bluffs. Moreover, he expected them to fail, and almost surely intended to follow them with major concessions to end the crisis, including accepting a proposal by Khrushchev or, preferably, from UN Secretary-General U Thant, that the US publicly withdraw its missiles from Turkey. All this is inferrable from evidence newly available within the last two years--new to me as well--contradicting all earlier accounts by participants. It does, surely, invalidate the most panicky estimates of nuclear danger that were made by some members of the public. But it does not follow, as some have mistakenly inferred, that the "real" risk of a US attack on Cuba, and hence the risk of subsequent escalation, possibly to nuclear attacks, should be

estimated at zero or anywhere close to it. In the light of information that became available to me a quarter-century ago-- whose significance has still not been absorbed by current analysts-- it does not change the conclusion, indicated above, that I reached then.

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Let me illustrate this with a single example. In a section headed "What Caused the Crisis?" in their 1989 study On the Brink, the Kennedy School scholars James Blight and David Welch observe: "Khrushchev's decision to deploy missiles in Cuba was only one half of the reason why there was a crisis in October 1962. The other half was the Kennedy Administration's unwillingness to tolerate them." (p. 120)

On the reasoning behind Khrushchev's decision there has been endless speculation, leading to a dramatic transformation of opinion based on revelations of the last two years (see my next section). As for the US contribution to the making of a crisis, all published accounts up through the latest ones agree that in the eyes of participants in the decisionmaking no "decision" seemed necessary or was made on this point: the unacceptability of the Soviet deployment is reported to have been immediately self-evident and unproblematic to all American officials involved (with the possible exception of Adlai Stevenson).

Blight and Welch summarize a number of recent interviews with participants and joint discussions among former officials and scholars in terms which fully accord with every other published account over the last quarter-century.

The policymakers, Blight and Welch report, "it appears, never seriously debated the issue. For them, it was simply axiomatic that the missiles could not be tolerated....When pressed by the scholars, the policymakers appealed to a variety of considerations to explain why the missiles could not be tolerated...But for whatever reasons, it is clear that no one in the ExComm argued that the missiles did not have to be removed from Cuba.

"Many scholars, on the other hand, repeatedly called this into question. Some of their arguments were these: while the deployment would have eased the Soviets' strategic nuclear predicament, it did not change the fundamental fact of American strategic nuclear superiority; the Americans had deployed nuclear missiles on the periphery of the Soviet Union, and there was no particular reason why the Soviets should not have been entitled to do the same with respect to the United States; there was nothing in international law which prohibited the Soviet action...

"The former ExComm members, on the other hand, were amazed to discover what they believed was disregard for the realities they faced in October 1962...To question the unacceptability of Soviet missiles in Cuba seemed to the ExComm members an abstract, ahistorical and naive exercise." (120-121).

In 1964 I interviewed Paul Nitze, who had been a member of the ExComm in 1962. Here are my notes on Nitze's account of his first response to the news in the evening of October 15 that U-2 photographs taken the day before now definitely revealed the presence of Soviet missiles on Cuba:

Several days before the 15th, Nitze was convinced by a briefing by a Navy captain in DIA [Defense Intelligence Agency] that the Soviets were probably putting in offensive missiles in Cuba; he informed [Chip Bohlen] of his conviction. Later, [Bohlen] asked him, "How did you know, before everyone else?" Others found their skepticism dissolving, but they didn't share Nitze's conviction. However, even for Nitze, "A certainty is very different from a high probability."

Nitze was at State with [Secretary of State] Rusk in dinner with Schroeder [foreign minister of West Germany] when Hilsman [Director of Intelligence and Research, State Department] called Rusk. They were in the midst of a discussion of Cuba. Rusk came back very pale. After dinner, he took Nitze out on terrace and told him. They discussed alternatives. Nitze had already thought about problem, concluded that invasion looked very bad--would be a bloody mess--and that air strike looked better; but that too, at that moment, didn't look good (especially a surprise attack, with political repercussions). He didn't immediately consider blockade. He thought we would just have to eat it. Rusk felt about the same way. (He wouldn't necessarily have predicted this reaction). Both agreed, it was a hideous prospect.

To "eat it" was a Nitze idiom, used elsewhere by him in the ExComm transcripts, for "accept it."

Like the notes above, these sharply contradict the universal assertion in the literature that "no one was for doing nothing" and that nearly all, or even a majority, of the ExComm members initially assumed that a military response was appropriate or inevitable. (Rusk, McNamara, Paul Nitze, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Maxwell Taylor assumed otherwise! almost certainly along with others).

These previously-unreported attitudes unprecedentedly focus attention on the President's own role in defining the situation as a "crisis," his possible reasons for doing so, and his personal influence in setting the terms of discussion in the ExComm from the beginning, and throughout.

--Interview and documentary data on the extraordinary and unprecedented secrecy restrictions--within the intelligence community itself--imposed by President Kennedy in the fall of 1962 on any evidence of offensive weapons on Cuba. (These had the ironic effect of delaying his own awareness of the possible presence of the missiles).

Various motives for the ad hoc secrecy system can be conjectured. But in absence to any published allusions to this special secrecy, no other analysts seem to have considered a hypothesis I explored at length in 1964 bearing on Khrushchev's hopes, otherwise still quite puzzling, for success with his gambit.

He may have expected, not entirely unrealistically, that Kennedy would seek to keep less-than-conclusive evidence suggesting missile deployment secret from domestic critics in the pre-election period. Misleading analogies from past experience of successful American presidential secrecy may have led him to overestimate how long a President could expect to withhold unequivocal evidence of this particular import from Congressional supporters of military action against Cuba. Whether Kennedy had any such intention or not, the missiles turned up in photos a bit too long before the election to be kept secret, even by an extraordinarily restrictive clearance system.

(Eisenhower had easily kept U-2 flights over the Soviet Union secret from the American and Russian publics--not from Khrushchev!--for four years: given that they were not finding any ICBMs. No one had a sufficient interest in leaking that inconclusive fact. But he could not have withheld photographic evidence of large numbers of ICBMs for four weeks--from columnist Joe Alsop and Congressional exponents of the "missile gap"--if such evidence had existed, no matter how many codewords he stamped on the photos: any more than Kennedy could sit on photos of MRBMs in Cuba for that long in the fall of 1962. Khrushchev could have missed the significance of this difference, in the mysterious workings of the American leak system.)

--Policy planning analyses, alluded to elsewhere but apparently not available to other researchers, produced by the Defense Department for the NSC on the implications of possible Soviet missiles in Cuba, as early as August and September, 1962.

--Evidence unknown during the crisis, the implications of which have been neglected by researchers until recently, that neither the destruction of an American U-2 by a Soviet surface-to-air missile nor the Cuban antiaircraft firing at low-level reconnaissance planes--destruction of which would almost certainly have led to US air attacks on Cuba--were under Khrushchev's control. (See summary in my New York Times Op-Ed piece, October 31, 1987, attached). (This has now been confirmed by a number of Soviet officials).

24

--Documentary evidence on the strong concern by President Kennedy and Secretary McNamara that Turkish missiles with American nuclear warheads might be fired, under Soviet attack, without the American authorisation formally required; and their efforts to prevent this. (This corresponds to their recently-reported fears of unauthorized action by Soviet missile officers on Cuba.)

The President's abortive effort on October 21, unreported elsewhere, to "defuse" the American warheads is the apparent basis of the widely-held erroneous belief that Kennedy had ordered the Turkish missiles removed, prior to the conclusion of the crisis: hence the mistaken inference that Robert Kennedy's private offer of their removal, "once the crisis was settled," was not a real concession.

--Risks of escalation that various members of the ExComm estimated: and accepted.

--A large body of data on various crises that suggests a specific, coherent crisis pattern--of which the Cuban Missile Crisis is an archtypal example--arising out of a failed, prematurely disclosed attempt to produce a fait accompli (a "fait malaccompli"). The pattern is characterized by mutual surprises, potential humiliation and domestic political vulnerability of leaders, and a high likelihood of unforeseen, radical, risky and violent responses.

The items above suggest some of the questions I addressed in 1964 that still seem pertinent to the scholarly debate today. But needless to say, 25 years of history, personal experience and new information have taught me new questions as much as new answers.

The greater part of what I plan to write and disseminate over the next six months will reflect hypotheses and inferences based on newly-published data along with my old yet-unpublished data, and my best present understanding of a number of issues.

I will not attempt to summarize these here, with one exception below that is especially relevant to current policy. But in a range of cases that is somewhat startling even to me, the import of my findings with respect to the most widely accepted answers to major questions is to turn them on their heads.

Some bodies of data available to me from my earlier study but evidently not drawn upon by any other published research include:

--Comprehensive notes of most ExComm meetings (including several for which no transcript or summary exists) by a participant.

--Interview data from 1964 on the initial views--prior to the first ExComm meeting (thus, prior to hearing the President's position)--by major ExComm members on the presence of the missiles and the appropriate US response.

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(Nitze has been interviewed subsequently on this incident, and published verbatim versions of his account--for example, in Blight and Welch, p. 139, or Elie Abel's The Missile Crisis, 1966, p. 21--are almost line-for-line identical with my 1964 paraphrase, with one exception: they omit the line italicized above, or any corresponding expression at all of Nitze's own opinion, or Rusk's.)

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as I learned from Robert Kennedy during my study in 1964--among other things that were very closely-held secrets at that time, unknown even to most members of the ExComm--on the climactic Saturday of the crisis, October 27, the likelihood of US attacks on Cuba had become strongly linked not only to the maintenance of Soviet missiles on Cuba but to further attacks on US U-2 (high-altitude) and low-level reconnaissance flights over Cuba, both of which had occurred that day.

The shootdown of a U-2 that morning by a Soviet surface-to-air missile (SAM) had been interpreted without any dissent or doubts in the ExComm as a deliberate escalation of the crisis by Khrushchev, his decision to draw "first blood." Though Kennedy chose not to carry out an earlier decision to respond to the first such attack by immediate attacks at least on the SAM that had fired--the Air Force was stopped just in time from implementing this earlier plan--his commitment, and that of the ExComm, was strengthened to respond forcefully in the case of any further losses of US planes.

As this decision was reached, Cuban antiaircraft was firing,

so far unsuccessfully, at the lower-level US reconnaissance that were within reach of their guns. Again, it was taken for granted that these guns, though manned by Cubans (unlike the SAMs, which were operated by Soviets), were under the ultimate control of Khrushchev.

To deter Khrushchev from interfering any further from US reconnaissance and triggering this commitment--from which fullscale US attacks and probably invasion would almost surely have followed--Robert Kennedy met with Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin in the early evening of Saturday, October 27, to convey to him personally, among several other related urgent warnings and offers, this particular decision.

In our interview two years later, Robert Kennedy informed me that he had told Dobrynin that US reconnaissance planes must and would continue to fly over Cuba, and if the Cubans or Soviets shot at these planes, the US would shoot back. Very specifically, he said: "I told him that if one more plane was destroyed, we would hit all the SAMs and probably the [surface-to-surface] missiles as well, and we would probably follow that with an invasion."

He also conveyed, without calling it that, an ultimatum to the Soviets to remove their missiles--with a time limit, he told me, of 48 hours--or the US would remove them by attack. But 48 hours was a long time in terms of the pace of that crisis: time for new maneuvers on both sides, appeals to the UN and world opinion, new temporizing proposals...

What no American foresaw or was able to explain for a quarter-century was the baffling abruptness of Khrushchev's decision to remove his missiles, giving up demands he had made public Saturday morning for a trade of Cuban and Turkish missiles, within a few hours of Robert Kennedy's warnings to Dobrynin.

It was in my study in 1964, after my discussion with Robert Kennedy, that I came upon highly-classified evidence, unknown to the Kennedy brothers and any member of the ExComm in 1962, that suggested a joint answer to two questions, an answer that recent testimony from former Soviet participants has greatly strengthened.

The first question, emphasized when I first published a summary of this finding in a New York Times Op Ed piece, October 31, 1987 [attached], is: Why did Khrushchev end the crisis the precise way he did: so hastily, without another day's bargaining? (As we now know, and he could well have guessed or hoped, such a delay might well have gained him crucial concessions from President Kennedy, amounting to Soviet victory).

But the second question, at issue here, is: How risky was the crisis at this point, given the real attitudes of the two superpower leaders?

A realistic answer to that reflects an estimate of what

Kennedy and McNamara were likely to do--not what they hoped or expected would happen--if Khrushchev had been less quick, by some hours, to back down in the early morning hours (Eastern time) of October 28. What Khrushchev knew but the Kennedys and other Americans did not was that the answer to that question was no longer reliably under the control of either of these two leaders.

US reconnaissance planes--low-level, though not U-2--were scheduled to fly over Cuba on Sunday. From Khrushchev's point of view, they might come as early as first light, less than 12 hours after receiving Kennedy's warning. Both within the ExComm and in his explicit, deterrent warning to Dobrynin, Kennedy had given up most of his freedom of action in the event of the loss of another US reconnaissance plane.

In the context of decisions and events to that point, he had very little freedom or power to refrain from carrying out US preparations to respond immediately to such a shootdown by either Cubans or Soviets with US attacks against Soviet units manning the SAMs. And the momentum of events would then almost surely carry him to attacks on the Soviet-manned surface-to-surface missiles, despite his and McNamara's fears of unauthorized launches by the crews of one or more of these missiles. Military and right-wing pressure to finish the job over overthrowing Castro by invasion would have been intense.

In turn, Khrushchev's subsequent freedom of action to refrain from any violent response, somewhere in the world, to the deaths of Soviet troops under US attack would not have been much greater, no matter how far behind he was in overall military strength.

This warning by Robert Kennedy was no bluff, and Khrushchev would have known that. But Khrushchev also knew something else, of which neither Kennedy was aware and no American on the ExComm had imagined as a possibility. (Until my publication in 1987, I seem to have been the only American to collect evidence on this point or to see its significance in the overall context).

He knew that he had ordered neither the Soviet firing at the U-2 nor the Cuban firing at the low-level reconnaissance planes; that both were against his wishes; and that he was powerless to prevent a repetition of the latter, at US planes coming over Cuba at first light.

Though no American at the time had given any attention whatever to the possibility of independent initiatives by Castro -- any more than by Soviet military subordinates controlling SAMs -- it was Castro who had ordered his antiaircraft to fire and was determined to persist in doing so, rejecting all appeals from the Soviets.

If the bargaining had persisted into Sunday morning or afternoon, the course of events would have depended not on attitudes or decisions by the superpower leaders--or even by

Castro--but on the accuracy of Cuban antiaircraft gunners.

As Castro told Tad Szulc many years later: "I am absolutely certain that if the low-level flights had been resumed [as was scheduled for October 28, US records show] we would have shot down one, two or three of these planes...With so many batteries firing, we would have shot down some planes. I don't know whether this would have started the nuclear war."

Khrushchev chose not to find out. He knew that he had lost control of events, lost ability to "manage" the crisis, to prevent reliably immediate and possibly unlimited escalation: except by ending the crisis immediately, without waiting even half a day longer for US concessions.

All he could do to reduce the risk of a cycle of violence starting soon after first light in the Caribbean was to begin at once to remove the missiles in the few remaining hours of darkness over Cuba, before Castro's gunners would get their next shot at US reconnaissance planes. Fortunately, he acted fast to do just that. Fortunately, his message to his commanders in Cuba and his message to Kennedy got through, fast.

(In 1987 his speechwriter, Fyodor Burlatsky, told me that Khrushchev's message announcing withdrawal was sent by car to a radio station to be broadcast publicly, rather than taking the time to use encoded diplomatic channels. He mentioned that "the car ran into some trouble on the way, an obstruction, which delayed it." Fortunately, not fatally long; "When it arrived, the manager of the station himself ran down the steps, snatched the message from the hands of the man in the car, and ran up the steps to broadcast it immediately.")

The President's bluffs--and Khrushchev's, too--came close to exploding. Contrary to their wishes and expectations, and in ways they neither controlled nor were aware of at the time, Kennedy and McNamara might well have found themselves, a few hours after Robert Kennedy's threats to Dobrynin, taking the actions and getting the war they were determined to avoid. And it could well have had the nuclear consequences they feared.

\cia\provocat.ion LTE  
May 31, 1990

### Covert Action and Provocation

1. A major function of a covert action or campaign of covert actions--like 34A, Mongoose, or the contras--may be to provoke, or to simulate, an opponent's action which will be used to "provoke," rationalize, or justify to the American public/Congress/allies a major escalation or aggressive or illegal/immoral action.

2. This provocation function is highly secret, and is rarely understood even within the wider government circles in which the campaign itself is known to be under consideration or underway. It is rarely disclosed to the public even when the existence of the covert campaign becomes known to the public.

3. Lacking knowledge of the provocation function, an observer or critic of the campaign is likely to find it puzzling, mysterious, paradoxical, an expression of irrationality or "bureaucratic madness," since one can imagine no (other) aim or function of the campaign that one could reasonably expect both to be achieved and to justify the cost or risk of the effort. The internal justifications that turn up in the records or testimony of officials fail to meet either of these criteria.

Hypotheses that suggest themselves is that officials became subject to wildly unreasonable, wishful expectations of effectiveness, or else that the program was a bureaucratic compromise, a sop to those who wanted more forceful action while reflecting the reservations and fear of commitment of the President or advisors close to him.

A third possibility to be considered is that the campaign is intended as a covert threat to the opponent, demonstrating a willingness to break the law or treaty commitments and suggesting a readiness to go further if necessary.

Yet another possible function, rarely considered, is that the campaign may lay the groundwork for carrying out threats or plans of escalation. It may provoke fears and reactions within the opponent's society that will justify more overt threats and preparations for escalation.

Thus, the contra operation was intended, in part, to provoke mobilization, repression, anti-American rhetoric and arms buildup--preferably, and eventually necessarily, from the Soviets--in the Sandinista leadership. It did have these effects, thus justifying "defensive" preparations in Honduras by the US and a Congressional and public perception that the Sandinistas were an evil presence and a menace, that they "had to go," and that more forceful measures, from a boycott to invasion, might be justified.

A further effect, foreseen and desired by some, is within the US itself. The campaign leads to building up covert action capability (in the case of Afghanistan and the contras, restoring it after period of cuts) and to increasing the influence in government circles of the managers of covert action, who tend to be relatively harder-line anti-Communists disposed to more forceful action if necessary. The process of getting agreement on the covert campaign, within the government and (since oversight has been expanded) in Congress, also creates a consensus that vital interests are involved, that "something must be done" and that illegal action is justified: and possibly more if necessary. (This was a major effect of the contra campaign).

But the possibility considered here is that the campaign may be hoped eventually to provoke, or permit a plausible simulation of an opponent's action that will be used to "trigger" a major US/allied initiative that will be presented as a justified or at least understandable "response."

4. All of these may apply in a given case, in the minds of different officials or agencies, and even within the mind of a particular official.

In the case of 34A, the campaign actually did trigger an action by the North Vietnamese--a "threatening" approach of a North Vietnamese patrol boat on August 2, 1964 to an American destroyer actually within what the North Vietnamese claimed as territorial waters--which could be presented as an attack to the American public and Congress.

The immediate response was to resume the patrol with an additional destroyer and with preparations for more air cover. This was explained as merely asserting US rights of free passage of the seas, "daring" the Vietnamese to repeat their "aggression." (Note the exact similarity to Reagan's operations off Libya, on several occasions in the '70's).

What the public did not know was that (as in the later case of Libya) further Vietnamese "attack" was desired as a rationale for carrying out US airstrike plans long-prepared, both to counter Goldwater's campaign calls for more forceful action and to demonstrate a willingness to carry out specific threats of escalation being made covertly at that time to the Hanoi leadership.

Moreover, the first incident made credible in the minds of the destroyer captains and crews the likelihood of further attacks by the Vietnamese. (The captains, like their superiors, were aware of the continuation of provocative attacks on North Vietnam by 34A operations during their patrol). Hence, ambiguous sonar signals

and sightings (during a night of near-zero visibility) were interpreted as an attack, just long enough for Washington decision-makers to commit themselves to a "response", which in turn provided the context for the President to ask and get a long-desired open-ended commitment from Congress to prevent "further aggression," a blank check for the escalation being secretly prepared.

In turn, the combination of continued secret threats to the Vietnamese, actual buildup of US airstrike capabilities in Vietnam (not very visible to the US public), and the Tonkin Gulf raids, provoked the NLF (or DRV) into attacks, for the first time, on US facilities in Vietnam, starting with a major attack on Bien Hoa airfield, where bombing planes had just arrived.

Though the President chose not to "respond" to these "provocations" just before the election, or on Christmas Eve, it was in this context that his advisors could be confident that "Pleikus are like streetcars." (Pleiku and Qui Nhon, attacks on which were the rationale for starting Rolling Thunder, were also airfields).

#### NOTES:

--Does a covert campaign inevitably commit a President to take further escalation if necessary? No. See JFK's refusal to allow further air raids or to provide air cover as the Bay of Pigs failed. Or LBJ's refusal to respond to attacks on Bien Hoa or the Brink BOQ, despite pressure to do so.

--Was there a difference between LBJ and JFK in commitment to not-losing in Vietnam? Yes. see JFK's refusal, under pressure, to express a definite commitment to this goal either in secret government directives or publicly. And his refusal to send combat troops, under pressure, in 1961. (And possibly, his decision to get rid of Diem and his brother). (And see RFK to me on his determination not to send combat forces, stemming from his own observation of French experience). LBJ, from early 1961 on, was on the other side of these issues.

--Is planning, preparation, and desire to escalate by McNamara and others tantamount to approval by the President? No. McNamara, like LBJ, was on the other side of each of the above proposed commitments, and was overruled by JFK. Nor was even LBJ quick to accept McNamara's pressure for Rolling Thunder as a strategy.

--Thus, agreement in Honolulu, just before JFK's death, by McNamara and military leaders on a covert campaign against North Vietnam did not assure that JFK would undertake this (though I think he probably would have). Nor would his acceptance ensure that he would have carried out either the Tonkin Gulf raids (though he might well have) or Rolling Thunder (much less likely). (JFK is not known to have had the same degree of aversion to bombing

attacks, still less covert operations, that he did to combat forces in Vietnam: but the latter were a fairly clear successor to Rolling Thunder).

--Was there a difference in JFK's and LBJ's attitudes to right-wing military dictatorships in Latin America as instruments of US policy? Yes. LBJ would not have put so much emphasis on the desirability of a Bosch or Frei regime, even if a Castro could be avoided. Just before JFK's death, military coups had overthrown civilian regimes in Honduras and the Dominican Republic. JFK had refused (? or at any rate, had not yet agreed) to recognize them; Thomas Mann, under LBJ, recognized them immediately. Also, LBJ quickly replaced the more neutralist Minh regime in Vietnam with Khanh, who favored escalation and accepted American direction (at first. Khanh was quickly replaced, he claims, when he entertained negotiations).

--It is now clear from the Mongoose documents and the October 1962 planning uncovered by Hershberg that, contrary to published accounts, JFK did not at all rule out direct American attack or invasion of Cuba after the Bay of Pigs.

Yet another function of a covert campaign can be to keep a hardline faction inside the government and its outside allies on board or in line by the tacit promise that more forceful action is not ruled out and may be forthcoming. This was probably one function of all three of the campaigns considered here. The existence of such a campaign does not necessarily mean that the President has decided to go further under any circumstances. He might even have decided privately that he will not, under any foreseeable circumstances.

On the other hand, the latter negative intention is hostage to circumstances, including the President's staying in office (JFK emphasized this contingency to O'Donnell in 1962, with respect to Vietnam) and staying alive (JFK failed this) in Vietnam) and in full control of himself and his forces (this was at risk in the Cuban Missile Crisis). The latter may be difficult in view of the enemy responses that the campaign does provoke, the "set" created within the government, and pressures to act created by the preparations and threats (e.g., the "disposal problem" before the Bay of Pigs, and presented by the contra buildup in Honduras).

Thus, the existence of Mongoose does not guarantee that the President was really contemplating invasion as a likelihood or even possibility early in 1962; though the urgent secret planning in October (under new circumstances, and the pressure of the campaign issue) has a strong flavor that he was at least seriously considering it then. At that point, the appearance of the Soviet missiles--unexpected by JFK--must have created in him intense, ambivalent tension: enormous bureaucratic and political pressure to carry out the already-prepared attack plans, and overwhelming

inhibition against doing so.

Secret preparations for both blockade and attack--thus keeping on board the military and civilian hardliners determined to attack--and then blockading and making overt threats and preparations for attack, JFK then made highly secret overtures--successfully concealed for 27 years even with the government, revealed only by Dobrynin in Moscow--to settle the conflict by trading Cuban and Turkish missiles. At the point when this private offer was, in effect, accepted publicly by the Soviets (Saturday morning) JFK temporarily lost control of his ExComm, who--ignorant of his secret proposal of the trade--strongly opposed his expressed willingness to "accept" the "Soviet" proposal. He postponed accepting this resolution for at least 24 hours (not, probably, much longer, as his secret instructions to Rusk on the "Cordier/U Thant ploy" indicates), during which both he and Khrushchev might well have lost control of events to the initiative of Castro and his anti-aircraft gunners. (Not realizing that Khrushchev had lost control of Castro, JFK did not realize that it was necessary, despite his warning to Khrushchev, to desist from sending low-level reconnaissance over Cuba while he awaited an answer to his Saturday night bluff/ultimatum).

--All of these reflections were stimulated by this week's preoccupation with the Indonesian coup: i.e., the real coup, by Suharto (and certainly, the US, with probably help from Japanese and perhaps others). The critical covert action was the "Untung attempted/abortive coup," simulating a PKI action, or constituting an action that Suharto could plausibly claim to believe was a PKI action (and which Nasution may actually have been misled to believe, at least temporarily, was PKI-inspired), thus rationalizing the dual campaigns of decapitating the PKI--killing several thousand of its leaders--and exterminating a large part of its mass support, while pushing aside Sukarno (without killing him).

The covert action trigger not only explained and "justified" the subsequent massacre and takeover by the Suharto faction of generals, but itself eliminated the military faction that was the main obstacle to this program, in its loyalty to Sukarno and/or opposition to such bloody measures.

The mass "popular, spontaneous" attacks on actual and alleged supporters of the PKI not only consolidated the destruction of PKI political power but they served to obscure the active role of the Indonesian military and thus provide an additional cover for the US role. As in the case of supposedly unofficial "private, rightwing deathsquads" in Latin and Central America, the cover provides plausible denial not only of any Presidential, or US, active responsibility but of active responsibility of US/Congressionally-supported military regime or forces.

Those in the government who were sincerely pessimistic about preventing PKI advances, under Sukarno sponsorship, earlier in 1965, were presumably looking at Nasution's unwillingness to move against Sukarno, or against the PKI in absence of approval from Sukarno, assuming Nasution to be unassailably able to veto a military initiative (like Yani, who opposed it). What they presumably failed to contemplate was a USG ruthlessness adequate to countenance and encourage a violent displacement of Yani--in a way that would not trigger civil war, i.e., by an allegedly PKI-inspired murder of Yani and his military allies--and that would either remove Nasution or make him an ally in the displacement of Sukarno (supposedly an ally of the murders) and the annihilation of the PKI.

Was JFK ruthless enough for that? We don't know. He accepted the killing of Trujillo, attempts to kill Castro, and the killing of Diem: the first two, enemies, the latter, a Catholic ally (that he had long supported) who had become politically embarrassing. He prepared, threatened, and contemplated at least the possibility of large-scale war in Cuba (in Mongoose and during the Missile Crisis) and in Indochina. But he did not actually commit, or directly contemplate, any massacres.

By the time of the Indonesian massacre, however, LBJ--and the subordinates he had inherited from JFK--had been bombing Vietnam for nine months (to be sure, with unusual "care" to minimize civilian casualties in the North) and had undertaken an openended commitment to massive troop escalation in Vietnam.

Indeed, as David Johnson suggested to me yesterday, Colby and others witting of our involvement in the Indonesian massacre (Halperin thinks this might well not have included McNamara and Rusk, though it might have) may have thought of themselves as averting a similar large-scale civil war, perhaps leading to American involvement, in Indonesia. Others may have comforted themselves, in the words of a military officers quoted by Kathy Kadane, that the PKI would have done the same if they had come to power. (This is, in fact, extremely unlikely, in view of the specific nature of the Indonesian Party and its tactics, its sponsorship within Indonesian society, and its path to power: wholly unlike that of the Chinese, Cambodian or Vietnamese Parties).

Other examples of "provocation plans": the Reichstag Fire; 34A and the Tonkin Gulf (and the air buildup inside South Vietnam in the fall of 1964); Track II in Chile in 1970, a direct parallel to the Gestapo action in Indonesia, with the removal of Schneider (= Yani, a Chief of Staff reluctant to move against the political leader or Constitution or to annihilate the Communists, his murder or kidnapping to be blamed on the Left and used as the excuse for a military takeover and annihilation campaign: with Pinochet finally playing the Suharto role, after direct evocation of the

Indonesian example in the warnings, "Djakarta is coming" to both reluctant generals and to the Left); US naval and aviation maneuvers and "patrols" close offshore Libya; the search for a Libyan connection to a "terrorist" incident (finally exploiting one as ambiguous, and probably as invalid, as the Tonkin Gulf "attack", likewise based on alleged comint); Hitler's simulation of Polish attacks on German border posts, September 1, 1939 (and earlier, his stimulation and simulation of Czech harassment of Sudetan Germans); contra terrorism in Nicaragua, to stimulate Nicaraguan "invasion" of Honduras; readiness to carry out leadership assassinations in Nicaragua to provoke Sandinista responses that would justify attacks or invasion; planting of "Sandinista" arms ships for El Salvador, like earlier "North Vietnamese" arms ship planted off South Vietnam in February 1965.

Finally, my new discovery: a De Soto patrol offshore Cuba at the start of the Missile Crisis, almost surely sent there as part of the October planning before the missiles were discovered, potentially to provoke a Cuban attack--or to claim one, as in August 1964--that would justify US attack or invasion.

Moreover, preparations to simulate (or provoke) a Cuban attack on Guantanamo, both before the Bay of Pigs (possibly without JFK's knowledge, to force his commitment: though conceivably, with his knowledge, to give him the option: to strengthen the effect of the "occupied beachhead" at the Bay of Pigs) and during Mongoose: with Mongoose activities being augmented in October. (Even on October 16; this is ambiguous. Was it simply inertia, the meeting having been scheduled before RFK learned of the missiles, that morning?)

Consider also, in this context, the presence of a "mother ship" off Nicaragua during the mining of Corinto (though this was covert) and of a provocative Naval presence off Nicaragua. Likewise the presence of the US Navy off Cuba in 1961, Brazil in 1964, off Vietnam in 1954, off Guatemala in 1954, and off Indonesia in 1958, Jordan in 1970. All these were to be ready to give support; but they were also in position to be "attacked," if that could be provoked or claimed. This potential was realized in Vietnam in 1964 and off Libya, twice, in the '80s.

There was also the attacks on various reconnaissance vehicles, with a potential for escalation that was not unwelcome to various officials, though not, ultimately, the President: the EC-121 in Korea, 1969, the capture of the Pueblo in 1968, the attack on the Liberty in 1967, the shootdown of the U2 in 1960 (which aborted the Paris Summit, at which Eisenhower would probably have made major concessions on Berlin).

(Similarly, on the Soviet side, invasions of Czechoslovakia and of Afghanistan prevented imminent possibilities of major arms control agreements, an effect that may not have seemed tragic to some Soviet military intelligence agencies who were interpreting

ambiguous risks and giving advise, in the role of Admiral US Grant in the Tonkin Gulf incident or the CIA officials urging the necessity of a U2 flight over Russia just before the Summit).

And then there is Panama! And Grenada: protecting the students. Indeed, David Johnson has begun to wonder about possible CIA influence on the Grenadan military who killed Maurice Bishop!

Cuba II

JULY 1978!

Did Chen ?!

[ Did CIA DDI analysts, prior to  
Cuba II, know fully of Mongosai?  
of assass. ?

b) Did McCon ?

Did this relate to discrepancy in forecasts?

c) Did DDP agree with McCon, in  
forecasting missiles?

d) Did Sutherland, in his study?

e) Did Wilman ?

(Schles? Sorenson?)

Dillon ?

Adrian - in call  
for a strike ?!

(f) Did: ITT; Hughes; know?

(Mafia did !)

March 25, 1990

I am asking to be a fiscally sponsored project of the Agape Foundation.

I will be undertaking the following activities:

1. Speaking and public education on the subject of the Persian Gulf War, its causes, risks and aftermath, to counter the militaristic pressures based on official interpretations.

Thus, for example, in the period since my first submission to Agape on March 11, I have spoken to this effect in lectures at California State College, Sacramento (March 14), Portland State College, Oregon (March 15), Black Oak Books (March 18), Urban School, San Francisco (March 19), talk shows on radio stations KGO (March 13), KGW (March 13), KLX (March 15), and I am scheduled to address Martin Luther King Junior High School tomorrow.

Next week I will be addressing a symposium--on "The Pentagon Papers: Twenty Years After"--at the JFK School, Harvard University, on the First Amendment Lessons of the Pentagon Papers (with relevance to the Persian Gulf war) crisis). The next day I will be the main speaker at a fundraiser for Social Workers for Social Responsibility in Boston.

2. Reading, research and writing on the recent crisis and its aftermath, both for the public education work above and for the more analytical research described below. All of these activities will require expenses for travel (next week's trip, for example, is covered by others only in small part), for books and publications, and for extensive phone, mail and FAX consultation with other movement activists and researchers.

3. Writing up for publication--either in the form of a book or a series of articles--my findings on the origins, risks and consequences of military crises, drawing on my study in particular of the Cuban Military Crisis and its bearing on the Persian Gulf War. (For a more detailed account of this comparison and the proposed study, see my memos, attached, of March 25, 1991 and October 9, 1990).

This effort will almost surely extend beyond the two months mentioned in my submission of March 11, probably to at least four months, perhaps six (and thus will ultimately require more money, from some source).

Sincerely yours,

f

## BUDGET (tentatively, four months)

SALARY:	\$16000
TRAVEL:	2000
OFFICE ASSISTANCE AND EXPENSES	1000
TELEPHONE, FAX, COPYING	600
BOOKS, JOURNALS	400
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	\$20,000

BUDGET (TWELVE MONTHS)

Project Director, Salary:	\$59,000
Office Expenses:	
Telephone	2,400
Books, periodicals	1,800
Research Assistance	800
Secretarial work	4,000
Office supplies and copying	600
Travel	1,800
 TOTAL:	 \$69,400

Daniel Ellsberg  
January 2, 1990

GRANT PROPOSAL FOR A WRITING PROJECT ON THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS  
AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR CURRENT NATO AND DISARMAMENT POLICY

Why restudy the Cuban Missile Crisis?

Because it was the Three Mile Island of the nuclear weapons era: the closest approach to a catastrophic nuclear war.

Because there is now more data available on high-level decisionmaking considerations in this crisis--including, for the first time, inside information on Soviet and Cuban decisions--than for any other; and I can integrate these data--much of which has emerged only in the last two years, some in the past month--with my own, hitherto-unrevealed findings from my participation in the crisis and my later official study of it.

Because the most authoritative current interpretations--still dominated by the foreign policy equivalents of nuclear power plant executives--are inadequate, mistaken or dangerously misleading, in particular misunderstanding and underestimating the risk at the time of nuclear war.

Because the urgency of seizing the current, unprecedented opportunity to denuclearize foreign policy and to achieve the near-abolition of nuclear weapons<sup>1</sup> can best be

<sup>1</sup> The opportunity is based on Gorbachev's demonstrated willingness to act on his "new way of thinking" by unilateral moves and restraint and by serious proposals toward ending the division of Europe and armed confrontation within it, letting go of the Soviet empire in East Europe, reducing and restructuring non-nuclear forces to "defensive sufficiency," and proposing reduction and restructuring of nuclear forces to mutual "minimum deterrence," as a transition to the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Already the resulting astonishing changes in East Europe and the Soviet Union have effectively eliminated the threat of a Soviet blitzkrieg in Europe, till now the principal legitimating rationale for NATO reliance on nuclear first-use threats and thus for most US nuclear weapons.

If political leaders in the US could be persuaded, in this new context, to take seriously and then to adopt and act upon the "new way of thinking" and behaving, this could lead to the effective mutual abandonment of nuclear first-use threats and, perhaps by the

NOT: 4) No strict threat  
(of SO FS; or US FS)  
Effective threat of int  
of SO FS (Banks)  
SU int. (Banks)

(5) Banks

6. Willing to trade missiles

7. Deciding to posture

Threat - bluff (on intelligence to trade

(4) intelligence to go to war)

8. WHY US decision (7) and blockade, and violate (a) without committing

9. WHY CRISIS? W6 K thought he could get away?

1) - End of crisis - risk; L of C

2) - Pres role (others, caution  
in deciding "missiles must  
go" - blockade  
- no (early) trade

3) K FS threat = NATO<sup>1</sup>  
= Loss of Control

understood in terms of the real risks of this earlier "close call."

Because the detailed examination now possible of this episode reveals psychological patterns and motivations of high-level risk-taking and deliberate confrontation, and high-level failures of comprehension and of control, that will continue to be of the greatest relevance to the risks of conflicts in the post-Cold War era (e.g., in Central America--as, this month in Panama--Eastern Europe and the Middle East).

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end of the century, the mutual destruction of the tactical and strategic nuclear weapons that support them.

This could mean, in the immediate future, the removal of all short-ranged nuclear missiles and artillery from Europe. That could be extended to the removal of nuclear weapons from surface ships and from overseas bases, in Europe, Korea and elsewhere. An appropriate goal by the end of the century would be the total elimination of tactical nuclear weapons worldwide and the near-abolition (over 95% reduction) of strategic weapons.

### Case Study of a Near Miss

Few have ever disagreed with the judgment that the Cuban Missile Crisis was the most dangerous episode of the nuclear era. But just how dangerous was it?

"Not very," is the emerging consensus of specialists in the subjects, who proceed to draw the related conclusion that the risks of the era as a whole have been, in reality, low and have been getting steadily lower for the beginning.<sup>2</sup>

I believe that these experts are wrong on both counts, dangerously so.

*Long* Despite the fact--revealed in recent testimony--that both US and Soviet leaderships already, in 1962, felt strongly deterred not only from nuclear but from non-nuclear conflict with each other's forces, we came as close to superpower armed conflict and possible nuclear launches that year, I believe, as Three Mile Island or Chernobyl came to a core meltdown of a nuclear reactor. Far closer, as in those cases, than any experts had earlier imagined possible, or in this case, than most experts yet perceive. Unacceptably close.

I believe that the same defense and foreign policy experts correspondingly underestimate the lesser but significant risks in other nuclear crises, both past and easily-imaginable future ones. By the same token, they fail to recognize either the urgency or the most relevant ways of reducing such risks, including opportunities offered at this moment to the NATO Alliance, first by the unilateral changes in Soviet military doctrine and deployment and then by the revolutionary political changes and the impending transformation of the military situation in East Europe. .

These judgments are based in part on my own direct participation in the Cuban Missile Crisis but much more on my highly-classified official study of that and other nuclear crises

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<sup>2</sup> Thus, McGeorge Bundy, Danger and Survival: Choices About the Bomb in the First Fifty Years, published late 1988, on the Missile Crisis: "I have argued that the risk was small, given the prudence and the unchallenged final control of the two leaders." (p. 461). And on his next to last page (616) the judgment: "Nuclear weapons have been with the world since 1945, and each ten-year period in that time has turned out to be less dangerous than the one before it....Still more plainly, the decades after Cuba have been less dangerous than before." On the preceding page he estimates that the risk of nuclear catastrophe in Cuba may have been "one in one hundred."

two years later--most of the findings from which have not yet become available to other analysts--and on my subsequent experience and study of escalation in Vietnam, as well as on information that has been newly revealed in the last two years.

In October 1962 I participated in the high-level staffwork of the Cuban Missile Crisis, serving on two of the three Working Groups reporting to the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (ExComm).

I went into that crisis as a specialist in nuclear war planning--I had drafted the Kennedy Administration's top secret guidance for the general nuclear war plans that became operational that year--and an expert on the procedures by which the execution of those plans might be ordered, either with or--as I had discovered to be possible-- without the immediate authorization of the President.

I came out of the crisis feeling I had experienced the most likely way a thermonuclear war would come to pass, if it ever did. The way deterrence on both sides could fail. The way in which the plans and procedures I had studied and helped design might actually come to be acted out. A dress rehearsal for nuclear catastrophe, on the scale of a million Hiroshimas.

I determined to study that episode, and any others like it, with the best official access to information that could be achieved, to discover the faults in a system that had let us come this far along the path to a war that, surely, neither side had earlier intended or desired.

This does not mean that I set out to examine this incident --when I had found sponsorship for such a study within the government a year later--with the presupposition that nuclear war had been very close, highly probable, or missed by a very narrow margin. On the contrary, I had believed during the height of the crisis--just as many authorities do today--that the actual probability of a major war, let alone a nuclear war, erupting momentarily was extremely low.

As the blockade had tightened on Cuba, I thought then--like certain "hawks" then and now--that Khrushchev, vastly outgunned both in the Caribbean and in strategic nuclear arms, "had" to back down and could be counted on to do so, almost surely before the threshold of hot war was crossed.

Looking back just a few years later--after studying crises including this one, then participating in several that took us to war--I came to feel I had been very mistaken. \*

In 1964 I spent over six months studying this and other nuclear crises with interdepartmental access to highly-classified

like Ho  
like SH  
(Mouja  
Khrushchev  
Castro)

1952-  
Prior to  
Sept '61;  
then  
(see section  
on Cuba  
Helferline)

information on this and other nuclear crises that was then virtually unprecedented and may still be so today. A sponsoring committee of officials at the deputy secretary level in State, Defense, CIA and the Staff Directorate of the Joint Chiefs of Staff assured me access to closely-held documentation in each of their respective agencies.

As I put together information some of which the highest officials had not known at the time and no one had seen whole before, it began to be clear that the overall chance of the military equivalent of a nuclear "meltdown"--without being close to certain or even as likely as not--had been significantly greater than I had supposed.

To my surprise, I discovered this inference of a "near miss" to be comparably strong in the case of at least one earlier episode, the Quemoy Crisis of 1957, which was not commonly regarded by the public or scholars to have been a nuclear crisis. (In more recent research, I have uncovered a number of other instances: see my Introduction to Protest and Survive, attached).

Moreover, in looking at a larger number of crises, not all of which had a nuclear dimension, I found patterns and phenomena of decisionmaking in crises--including psychological reactions to events threatening humiliation, and failures in understanding, in communication and in control of forces--that suggested that the potential danger in Cuba or Quemoy was not peculiar to the particular personalities involved nor their particular strategic context.

After reporting orally my major findings to the committee of departmental planners in the fall of 1964, I accepted an invitation that came at that time to continue my study of crisis decision-making from even further inside, as a highest-level civil servant (GS-18) serving as Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs) observing, by participating in, the secret escalation of US intervention in Vietnam.

My preoccupation with Vietnam turned out to last 11 years. That included two years as a field observer for the Embassy in Vietnam, two years helping write and analysing lessons from the top secret history of our decision-making (the Pentagon Papers) and six years working to end our involvement, in particular by revealing what I knew about it.

What I learned of crises and hot war in that time--11 years watching vastly outgunned Vietnamese and hopelessly stalemated Americans both refusing to back down, instead crossing threshold after threshold of escalating violence--further confirmed what I had discovered in my crisis study of 1964:

Seaborn, 1964

added  
Kass, '61  
(Seaborn)

We had come much closer to stumbling into a major war in 1962 than I had realized at the time, or most other analysts recognize now. And it could happen again.

One major body of evidence leading to this conclusion--one of several lines of argument I will present in this study--was first revealed publicly by me in an Op-Ed piece in the New York Times on the 25th anniversary of the crisis. Rather than summarize that brief essay, which is already very condensed, I will reproduce it here:

# The Day Castro Almost

By Daniel Ellsberg

**E**ARLY Sunday morning 25 years ago this week, the Moscow radio began broadcasting Nikita S. Khrushchev's full acceptance of John F. Kennedy's proposal — received just the night before — that the Soviet Union remove all offensive missiles from Cuba in return for nothing more than a conditional American pledge not to invade the island. Thus the Cuban missile crisis was ended by Mr. Khrushchev as abruptly, and for American officials as unexpectedly, as it began.

For the last quarter of a century, American analysts of the crisis have found the suddenness of Mr. Khrushchev's concession to American terms on Oct. 28, 1962, inexplicable. One hypothesis that has been missing from official and scholarly analyses is that the crisis provides an example of how the superpowers can be placed at the mercy of third parties.

Even in Moscow, some were puzzled by the special haste that Sunday.

"They were very, very nervous at this time," Fyodor Burlatsky, Mr. Khrushchev's speech-writer, recalled this month in a conversation about

Daniel Ellsberg, a consultant on committees reporting to the National Security Council during the Cuban missile crisis, is now conducting independent research on the risks of nuclear war.

the drafters of the Soviet message.

"This letter was not drafted in the Kremlin, nor in the Politburo. It was drafted at Khrushchev's dacha, by a very small group. As soon as it was done, they ran it to the radio station. That is to say, they sent it by car, very fast; as a matter of fact, the car ran into some trouble on the way, an obstruction, which delayed it. When it arrived, the manager of the station himself ran down the steps, snatched the message from the hands of the man in the car, and ran up the steps to broadcast it immediately."

There were good reasons for a sense

## Why did Khrushchev blink?

of urgency in Moscow. I learned about one of them from Robert F. Kennedy in 1964 while studying communications between governments in nuclear crises. He told me — in more detail than he later made public in his memoir, "Thirteen Days" — that at his brother's direction on Saturday evening, Oct. 27, 1962, he began a secret discussion with the Soviet Ambassador, Anatoly F. Dobrynin. Mr. Kennedy said he impressed on the Ambassador the serious implications of the attacks that day on American reconnaissance aircraft.

Cuban antiaircraft artillery had begun firing Saturday morning at low-flying planes, damaging at least one. Moreover, a surface-to-air missile, presumed to be controlled by Soviet forces, had shot down a U-2 aircraft from an altitude higher than the artillery could reach, causing the first fatality of the crisis.

A transcript of the White House meetings of Oct. 27, recently made public at Harvard University, makes clear that no participant in those discussions questioned the assumption of iron control by Soviet leaders over their own subordinates in Cuba or over Cuban forces. So both types of firing were interpreted, without doubts, as a deliberate escalation, a change of orders by Mr. Khrushchev.

In fact, according to Mr. Burlatsky, "Khrushchev had given very strong, very precise orders that Soviet officers should make no provocation, initiate no attack in Cuba." In particular, he said, the firing of the surface-to-air missile that destroyed the American U-2 "was done absolutely without the direction of Khrushchev and the Soviet high command. In fact it was against their orders, and Khrushchev was very apprehensive about the American reaction."

Robert Kennedy's mission Saturday evening was in part to induce Mr. Khrushchev to recognize the dangers of what Washington interpreted as his decision to escalate and to get him to refrain from further attacks on reconnaissance planes, starting with flights scheduled for the next day.

In his memoir, Mr. Kennedy wrote that he told the Soviet Ambassador

3 MRBM's

not so  
(Mikoyan)

# Started World War III

that "our photographic reconnaissance planes would have to continue to fly over Cuba, and if the Cubans or Soviets shot at these planes, then we would have to shoot back."

But in his discussion with me in 1964, Mr. Kennedy was more specific. "If one more plane was destroyed," he said he had told Mr. Dobrynin, "we would hit all the SAM's [surface-to-air missiles] immediately, and probably the [surface-to-surface] missiles as well, and we would probably follow that with an invasion."

This warning was obviously no bluff. The Oct. 27 White House transcript reveals that it conveyed accurately to the Russians the consensus of the White House discussions that afternoon. But the warning almost surely had more impact than was intended, for a reason the President and his advisers did not know about and, as the transcript shows, had failed to discuss even as a possibility.

Very simply, the warning was directed to the wrong party. Even if he could expect to control future firings of surface-to-air missiles, Mr. Khrushchev by this point had no influence over the Cuban antiaircraft artillerymen who threatened low-flying flights. They had begun firing on Saturday morning on the orders of Fidel Castro, who was determined to defend the sovereignty of Cuban air space regardless of Soviet desires to avoid provoking American retaliation.

As Mr. Castro said to Tad Szulc in 1984: "It was we who gave the order to fire against the low-level flights.... We had simply presented our viewpoint to [the Russians], our opposi-

tion to low-level flights, and we ordered our batteries to fire on them."

When he heard Mr. Dobrynin's account of his meeting with Robert Kennedy, Mr. Khrushchev could only have concluded that he was on the way to losing both his nuclear missiles and surface-to-air missiles, with heavy Soviet casualties and the likelihood of further escalation as soon as American reconnaissance planes entered Cuban air space, perhaps within 12 hours. If there was any way to avert this, it could only be to announce his acceptance of President Kennedy's Saturday night proposal and to start

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## A Cuban finger was on the button.

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dismantling missiles before a shoot-down and reprisal occurred.

Mr. Khrushchev's order to dismantle the missiles arrived in Cuba between 1 and 3 A.M. Cuban time Sunday, according to my notes from 1964. The dismantling began at 5 A.M. The race to the radio station with the Soviet announcement, which bypassed even slower diplomatic channels, came a few hours later.

It came just in time. At 9 Sunday morning, about the time Moscow Radio began its broadcast, the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed "tentatively to

schedule four low-level recon flights for late afternoon, and that aircraft would fly through any fire encountered." (The President canceled these flights only after Mr. Khrushchev's concession was received.)

In Mr. Castro's opinion, expressed to Mr. Szulc, "I am absolutely certain that if the low-level flights had been resumed we would have shot down one, two or three of these planes.... With so many batteries firing, we would have shot down some planes. I don't know whether this would have started the nuclear war."

As it worked out, Mr. Castro did not start a war. Instead, he lost the missile crisis for Mr. Khrushchev. It was indeed, in the end, a Cuban crisis after all. But it was the leaders of the two superpowers who had between them unwittingly contrived to put a trigger to World War III in the hands of Fidel Castro. For reasons he never knew in detail, President Kennedy's estimate during the crisis of the odds of it erupting into general war — "between one in three and even" — does not seem too high.

Mr. Khrushchev paid a heavy political price for withdrawing so abruptly from what he had discovered to be Cuban roulette; yet surely he was wise to do so, without awaiting one more day's spin of the chamber. Explaining his decision to suddenly remove his forces from dangers to which he should never have exposed them, Mr. Khrushchev said later, "A smell of scorching hung in the air."

That warning scent drifts on the wind today, this time from the direction of the Persian Gulf. □

Since this essay was published, a number of Soviet officials have added their voices to Burlatsky's, confirming Khrushchev's lack of control of Castro's antiaircraft or, on the morning of October 27, 1962, the actions of his own Soviet-manned SAM-site. [The latest data on this point has just appeared, in the Winter 1989/90 issue of International Security: "Essence of Revision: Moscow, Havana, and the Cuban Missile Crisis," Bruce J. Allyn, James G. Blight, and David A. Welch.]

In effect, Khrushchev had no more practical control over the gunners and missilemen firing from Cuba at American planes on Saturday, October 27, 1962 than Gorbachev had over the Chernobyl reactor crew.

Yet not only was Kennedy ignorant of this, even as a possibility, at the time, but his then-national security assistant McGeorge Bundy seems unaware of it to the present day: to the considerable detriment of his analysis, which aims to be reassuring. Thus he argues in Danger and Survival, published in late 1988:

"Yet it would be a mistake to conclude that the slide to unlimited escalation was only one move away on Saturday night. Let us look again at the prospects as they stood then. The worst that we could expect from Khrushchev that night was that he would reject our message and somehow try to extend the dickering he had begun on Friday, but he was in no position to take violent action...He certainly did not stand to gain by maintaining or increasing the challenge created by the killing of Major Anderson the day before, and he had been warned of the dangers in that course...It was unlikely then that Khrushchev would risk a dangerous next step. Control of any escalation still rested with Kennedy..."

It is almost painful, or frightening, to read this account in the present awareness that it was not by Khrushchev's orders or desires that Major Anderson had been attacked. Nor, indeed, was it Khrushchev who was planning to take violent action the next day against American pilots, but Castro: whose antiaircraft attacks were sure to be misinterpreted again by Bundy and Kennedy as an increased "challenge" by Khrushchev himself.

Kennedy's warning had been misdirected, as was his planned response to the next attacks. Without realizing it, he was threatening, and planning, to kill Russians--at surface-to-air missile sites, and possibly at nuclear missile sites--if and when Cubans--under Cuban, not Soviet command--shot down another recon plane.

Unlimited escalation was not inevitable that Saturday night, but the fateful slide toward it, the launching of a cycle of

*on Castro request for SU we strike!*

8

violence, was indeed but one move away. And, dangerously unknown to Kennedy then--or yet, it seems, to Bundy--the move was to be Castro's: youngest of the three leaders, ignored, enraged and humiliated by both the others, the one whose country was facing direct attack and being overflown by hostile planes...

Nor was lack of control limited to the Soviet/Cuban side. On that same climactic Saturday Kennedy was informed that a US Strategic Air Command U-2 had "strayed accidentally" into Soviet northern airspace (in the same general area where the KAL-007 was shot down in 1983), causing Soviet fighters to scramble in pursuit: possibly, Kennedy was advised, in the belief that it was the precursor to an American first strike.

Bundy himself mentions a few more American "loose ends" that he and his boss did not know at the time, suggesting "imperfect crisis management" (p. 459):

"Only in recent years, for example, have I learned that air force generals seem to have taken it on themselves to give their alert orders in unencrypted language so that their message would more certainly reach Moscow, or that the naval campaign of surveillance over Soviet submarines may have been prosecuted well beyond the immediate requirements of the quarantine [e.g., forcing Soviet submarines to surface, in part by dropping "small" depth charges], or that the army's plans for invasion probably included the movement of tactical nuclear weapons to Cuba.

It may well be, as Bundy says, that each leader "was determined not to let matters spin out of control" (p. 453) but matters were spinning out of control nevertheless, more than they knew.

When the Cuban Missile Crisis is adequately understood, it seems as unwarranted to conclude, with Bundy, that "the risks that might arise as one step followed another...were probably overestimated on the crucial Saturday," or that the overall risks in this or other such crises, past or future, can be seen as "small, given the prudence and the unchallenged final control of the two leaders," as to say the same thing for the risk of a core meltdown at Chernobyl.

*on 23-24*

### My Current Writing Project

A great deal of additional information on the Cuban Missile Crisis has become available in the quarter-century since my 1964 study. In particular, the coincidence of the onset of Soviet glasnost and the 25th anniversary of the crisis stimulated unprecedented symposia of former US and Soviet officials.

Alongside these, a public television series, important Freedom of Information Act requests, and significant memoirs, have resulted in a flood of significant new data just in the last two years. All this has reawakened intense scholarly interest, controversy and creativity. This is true to a lesser degree for other nuclear crises as well.

Earlier research grants over the past several years have permitted me to benefit from reading nearly all of this material, which has reshaped many aspects of my understanding of the crisis. But this reading has also made me aware that a great deal of the data made available to me in 1964 has still not publicly been released,<sup>3</sup> and that almost all current analyses and inferences published about the crisis suffer significantly from this lack.

It is clearly time for me to contribute to the ongoing active discussion of the Cuban Missile Crisis and of the nuclear era as a whole by writing up and disseminating the relevant data from my earlier official, classified study--which dealt with a number of other high-level crises, in addition to Cuba--along with my most recent hypotheses, speculations and conclusions reflecting both the new and the old information.

I plan to spend at least the next six months doing this, with articles, research memoranda and a book as the eventual product.

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<sup>3</sup> One of the historians most knowledgeable of the available materials, Marc Trachtenberg, has specifically drawn attention (International Security, Summer 1985) to the unavailability to scholars of two important documents: "the extensive, almost verbatim notes that Paul Nitze took of meetings during the crisis"; and an analysis requested by the National Security Council on August 23, 1962--well before the missiles were photographed on October 14--"of the probable military, political and psychological impact of the establishment in Cuba of either surface-to-air or surface-to-surface missiles which could reach the U.S." Of the latter Trachtenberg says, "It is unclear whether such a study was ever written; an attempt to locate it via the Freedom of Information Act proved unsuccessful." The Harvard researchers James Blight and David Welch were told by Paul Nitze in 1987 that he had lost his notes of the meetings.

Fortunately, I have not lost my own complete notes, from 1964, on Nitze's notes, nor on the other study in question.

My findings will confront most of the currently accepted interpretations and stand them on their head.

The argument in the Op-Ed essay reproduced above as to why Khrushchev ended the crisis so abruptly on American terms is one example of this. One further example--not hitherto revealed publicly--might be cited here, relating to the prior question of why there was a crisis at all.

In a section headed "What Caused the Crisis?" in their 1989 study On the Brink, the Kennedy School scholars James Blight and David Welch observe: "Khrushchev's decision to deploy missiles in Cuba was only one half of the reason why there was a crisis in October 1962. The other half was the Kennedy Administration's unwillingness to tolerate them." (p. 120)

On the reasoning behind Khrushchev's decision there has been a dramatic transformation of opinion based on revelations of the last two years (see my next section). This has not occurred with respect to the US contribution to the making of a crisis, on which all published accounts, up through the latest ones, agree.

On the basis of interviews with former officials, all scholars have concluded--though with some puzzlement--that in the eyes of participants no "decision" seemed necessary or was consciously made on the issue that Blight and Welch raise. The "intolerable" nature of the secret Soviet deployment, hence the appropriateness of using all necessary military means to remove them, is reported to have been immediately self-evident and unproblematic to all American officials involved.

Blight and Welch summarize a number of recent interviews with participants and joint discussions among former officials and scholars in terms which fully accord with every other published account over the last quarter-century.

The policymakers, Blight and Welch report, "it appears, never seriously debated the issue. For them, it was simply axiomatic that the missiles could not be tolerated. Hawks' Cay conference participants heard Maxwell Taylor put the issue to them with perfect clarity: 'There was no question about the problem,' he said. 'The President announced his objective within an hour after seeing the photographs of the missiles. It was to get the missiles out of Cuba.'"

"When pressed by the scholars, the policymakers appealed to a variety of considerations to explain why the missiles could not be tolerated....But for whatever reasons, it is clear that no one in the ExComm argued that the missiles did not have to be removed from Cuba...To question the unacceptability of Soviet missiles in

Cuba seemed to the ExComm members an abstract, ahistorical and naive exercise."

Blight and Welch make clear their understanding, shared by all analysts, that the President's reaction to the news was not determinative of the others' but merely characteristic, a common judgment independently arrived at by every other official involved.

Thus the American contribution to the existence of the crisis, its perception as a "national security crisis" legitimating and requiring a military response, is not attributed to the President himself. It is seen as a unanimous group response, spontaneous and inevitable, dictated by a Cold War Zeitgeist.

Now, President Kennedy, as it turned out, was not told of the photographs and their import by McGeorge Bundy till 8 AM Tuesday morning, October 16. The first meeting of the officials he wished to consult--later designated the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (ExComm)--took place at 11:50 AM, or several hours after General Taylor reports the President had announced his objective (which Kennedy reiterated at the end of this first hour's meeting).

But nearly every official present at that meeting had been told the news on the evening before, October 15. Curiously, although various accounts of the crisis have described the exact circumstances under which these dozen or so officials were given the information, there is not one line in the literature, reflecting interviews and memoirs, that describes the initial judgement of a single one of these men that first evening as to what the US should or should not do.

No evidence has ever been published, and none seems to have been probed for, as to what any of these officials thought, or said to each other, in the 15 hours or so before they heard the President's view of the situation.

It happens that my own interviews of several officials in 1964 did bear on this point, as does my copy of Paul Nitze's notes on the ExComm meetings. [Nitze gave me access to his notes in 1964; no other researcher seems to have seen them.] These data are in considerable contrast to the longstanding consensual account.

Here, for example, is a verbatim copy of my notes from 1964 paraphrasing part of my interview with Paul Nitze, who at the time of the crisis was Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs). The passage relates to the evening of Monday, October 15, when Nitze and Secretary of State Rusk learned that photographs taken the day before and analyzed that afternoon had definitely confirmed the presence of Soviet missiles on Cuba:

Nitze was at State with [Secretary of State] Rusk in dinner with Schroeder [foreign minister of West Germany] when Hilsman [Director of Intelligence and Research, State Department] called Rusk. They were in the midst of a discussion of Cuba. Rusk came back very pale. After dinner, he took Nitze out on terrace and told him. They discussed alternatives. Nitze had already thought about problem, concluded that invasion looked very bad--would be a bloody mess--and that air strike looked better; but that too, at that moment, didn't look good (especially a surprise attack, with political repercussions). He didn't immediately consider blockade. He thought we would just have to eat it. Rusk felt about the same way. (He wouldn't necessarily have predicted this reaction). Both agreed, it was a hideous prospect.

To "eat it" was a Nitze idiom, used elsewhere by him in the ExComm transcripts, for "accept it, reluctantly." The records of the crisis do not show Nitze making this judgment again from the day he joined the ExComm group on October 17, a day after the President had announced his determination not to "eat it"; Nitze was later to be counted among the "hawks."

But Secretary of State Rusk was not the only cabinet-level officer whose first response--like Nitze's--was that the missiles would have to be accepted, given the defects of military measures to remove them.

Secretary of Defense McNamara carried that attitude into the first meeting, and--contrary to the generalization reported by Blight and Welch above--he continued to argue for it in subsequent meetings, even after the President had expressed his contrary view.

Thus, my verbatim transcript of the notes Paul Nitze took of the morning meeting of October 17 [no other record of this meeting has been released] shows McNamara commenting "No military threat justifying response." He proceeds to lay out an approach he had presented to the President the day before, which does accept indefinitely the continued presence in Cuba of the missiles already there, while taking steps to prevent their being increased in number and to prevent their being used.

Thus, when McNamara launched his famous advocacy of a blockade, it was not to meet a goal of eventually eliminating the missiles that had just been discovered but simply to prevent further introduction of missiles into Cuba. His proposal, to which he returned several times, presumed that the missiles already there would be allowed to remain.

He proposed aerial surveillance of the missiles already deployed, to be continued indefinitely into the future, with a warning to the Soviet Union that if there were ever signs that the

missiles were about to be launched, the US would respond not only against the missiles in Cuba but against the Soviet Union.

As McNamara had put it on October 16, "Now this alternative doesn't seem to be a very acceptable one, but wait until you work on the others."

As the Secretary of Defense repeatedly emphasized, in front of the President and the rest of the ExComm, he did not "think there is a military problem here" [posed by the Soviet deployment].

Rather, there was a "domestic political problem," raised precisely by the President's statement at a press conference September 13 that if an offensive capability against the US should be emplaced on Cuba, "the United States would act."

The real purpose of the "little package" he had outlined, McNamara explained, was to deal with the "domestic political problem" by fulfilling minimally the "action requirement" in the President's September 13 statement.

He pointed out: "We didn't say we'd go in and...kill them, we said we'd act. Well, how will we act? Well, we want to prevent their use," which we would do by the surveillance and warning.

Undersecretary of State George Ball commented, "Yeah, well as far as the American people are concerned, action means military action, period."

McNamara pointed to the blockade in his proposal. Ball raised a question whether the actual operation of a blockade "isn't a greater involvement almost than a military action" [i.e., compared to an airstrike] and McNamara agreed that it "might well be."

Correspondingly, Nitze's notes of October 17 show, on the next day McNamara followed his reiteration of his blockade-and-surveillance package with a "Variant. Surveillance. Will attack Soviet Union if preparation to launch against US."

In other words, McNamara's "variant" dropped the blockade, limiting US actions to aerial and electronic surveillance, with offensive action only in the event that the US believed actual missile attack was imminent from Cuba. This implied accepting indefinitely not only the missiles already on Cuba but possible further additions (which a blockade, here eschewed, could prevent).

Such a proposition was consistent with McNamara's repeated judgment, with which Bundy says he and "most others" agreed, that it made no difference at all to the strategic balance, it had no strategic impact on the security of the US, if missiles aimed at the US were based in Cuba or in Russia.

as  
Ball  
target

Thus the Secretary of Defense. A final citation, from the same page of Nitze's notes on the October 17 meeting. Just before McNamara's comments, Nitze quotes General Maxwell Taylor, as saying: "Why don't we relax about it. Accept it as another target." [I.e., accept the new missile bases on Cuba as semi-permanent, like ICBM bases in the Soviet Union; simply enter them on Strategic Air Command target lists as new counterforce targets to be struck in the event of general nuclear war, along with those in the Soviet Union.] This thought is offered by the only military man on the ExComm, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

All these previously-unreported attitudes focus new attention on the President's own role in defining the situation as a "crisis," on his possible reasons for doing so--including the personal psychological and domestic political pressures that impact specifically on the President rather than on his chief officials--and on his personal influence in setting the terms of discussion in the ExComm from the beginning, and throughout.

In his own initial bent to military action and his determination that the missiles already in Cuba could not be allowed to remain, Kennedy was neither yielding to nor expressing a clear consensus among ExComm members. Responsibility for the risks involved in subsequent actions is his, in much more than a formal sense.

My research will show that a good deal of evidence, from this crisis and many others, can be brought to bear on the vital question: When, and why, can a future president be expected to choose such risks for the nation and the globe in face of a "political" challenge no more compelling of military action than Kennedy's Defense Secretary saw in the Soviet deployment to Cuba?

Or, to bring this right up to date: When might a future president undertake an action as aggressive as President Bush's invasion of Panama two weeks ago, despite risks that might be greater and national security stakes no more compelling than those presented by General Manuel Noriega?

"WHY?"

### Some Policy Implications

My interest in this matter is not now, any more than it was in my crisis study of 1964 or my participation in the Pentagon Papers study in 1967-69, primarily that of an historian. My aim, now as then, is an understanding of events that is not only accurate but relevant to policymaking in ways that could help reduce the risk of nuclear war.

I was drawn back to this episode early in 1989 because it was newly apparent that such an understanding is within reach. Since then, even more information has become available, by recent declassification and in meetings with former officials and analysts in Moscow and Havana.

By mid-1989, moreover, my research seemed to have acquired new policy relevance, because it is precisely from the perspective I propose that essential analogies emerge between the Cuban Missile Crisis and the issues in the intense controversy over short-range nuclear missiles and artillery which threatened to divide the NATO Alliance at the NATO Summit in May, 1989 and still persists.

The immediate issue is whether to maintain and "modernize" US and German short-range nuclear missile forces (SNF) in West Germany, or to reduce or eliminate them--along with the more numerous Soviet short-range missiles in East Europe--by an agreement with the Soviets.

Because the Soviets had recently proposed mutual elimination of both SNF and nuclear artillery in Europe, and this is supported by 90% of the German public--a large majority of all parties--elimination of such weapons and perhaps of all nuclear weapons from the continent of Europe had become by mid-1989 a live political option for the first time since such weapons were introduced in the mid-Fifties.

But by November 9--the opening of the Berlin Wall, with the tolerance and even encouragement of Gorbachev--a truly revolutionary perspective opened: the prospect not merely of the reduction and defensive restructuring of Soviet forces in East Germany but the removal of Soviet forces from East Europe, along with the reorientation of other East European forces and of Soviet forces in the USSR away from any possibility of a concerted offensive.

In other words, if Gorbachev's present policies, within a few years (and effectively, right now or very soon) the single legitimating rationale for NATO nuclear first-use policies will have disappeared. This does not mean that US tactical nuclear weapons will automatically be withdrawn from Europe as a consequence of the loss of their rationale.

On the contrary, the Bush Administration and some of its allies, along with many Establishment opinionmakers, continue to insist on the "need" to maintain US nuclear weapons in Europe and on naval vessels, projecting a first-use capability and threat. Yet with the change in political and military context, the removal of nuclear weapons and even the rejection of first-use doctrine in Europe appears political possible (to say the least) in a way that has not been true for almost forty years.

This removal, in turn--in ways discussed below--would open the way to the rejection of nuclear first-use policies worldwide, and to truly radical mutual reductions in tactical and strategic nuclear stockpiles. And its immediate effect in Europe would be a lasting reduction in the risk of nuclear war erupting in an unpremeditated manner from a future crisis.

But none of this will come about, or even get underway, without sharp political debate and struggle, in this country as well as in Europe, since the Bush Administration and the Thatcher Government have made it one of their highest foreign policy priorities to avert elimination of nuclear weapons from Europe and to postpone as long as possible even the start of negotiations over reducing such weapons.

To override this inertial resistance in the US Executive Branch, I believe, will require a considerable reconstitution of the antinuclear educational and lobbying effort of the early Eighties. (A reconstitution of the mass public movement is unlikely, but in the present international context, I believe, unnecessary).

That is not certain to happen without better understanding than is common at present among activists and sympathetic experts--including Congressional staffs--of the urgency of seizing the present unprecedented opportunity to rid Europe of nuclear weapons.

At this point, however, the issues are so poorly discussed in this country that it is scarcely comprehensible why either side feels so strongly about its position: especially in light of the fact that the particular weapons in question are only a fraction of the nuclear weapons available to NATO.

Are short-range missiles and artillery in Europe really crucial to the credibility of NATO's first-use nuclear threats, as Bush and his lieutenants appear to believe? Do they add significantly to the risk of nuclear disaster, as the German public fears?

I believe the answer to each of these questions is, "Yes."

In terms of policy, the second point seems overriding. I agree strongly with the Germans and the Soviets: the SNF should

go, on both sides, and the nuclear artillery with them. But one of the reasons these weapons are unacceptably dangerous is also the main reason that Bush and the NATO Commanders are right, too, to believe that the short-range land-based nuclear weapons are effective first-use threats. Which is a major reason why they cling to them so fanatically.

These weapons are, indeed, significantly more likely to be launched--in the event of armed conflict taking place on the territory of West Germany--than any other element in the NATO panoply of tactical or strategic nuclear weapons. (The term "tactical" for these weapons, by the way, refers to their shorter range--which assures that they would all land in Germany, East or West--not to limits on their explosive power. The Lance warhead, for example, could have the explosive force of 100,000 tons of TNT, equivalent to the power of eight Hiroshima bombs).

The main reason for this for this greater likelihood of detonation is not one that Bush or NATO officials care to discuss openly. The American public has never heard it officially and might, at first, find it hard to take seriously. Most people would be reluctant to believe that responsible officials could have adopted and maintained an approach so fundamentally reckless.

An informed understanding of the real "deterrent" functioning of these particular weapons is long overdue, both for the public and for most specialists. And there is no better way to grasp the logic of these peculiar instruments of deterrent strategy than to examine closely certain aspects of the Cuban Missile Crisis, as that is now susceptible of being understood.

Crucial to the analogy are several of the most striking revelations of the last two years.

First: it is now accepted that Soviet leaders were convinced, in the spring of 1962, that an American invasion of Cuba was highly likely; they expected it in the fall of 1962.

Second, it is accepted--in a dramatic transformation of consensus opinion among American analysts--that a major motive, at least comparably important to any other, driving Khrushchev's decision to deploy medium- and intermediate-range missiles secretly to Cuba was his desire to avert such an invasion by deterring it.

So new, and important, are these revelations (along with newly-declassified documents disclosing--contrary to continued denials by McNamara and Bundy--serious attention by top American officials including the President to contingency planning for a fall invasion of Cuba throughout 1962) that their implications for an overall understanding of the crisis are only beginning to be explored.

In particular, no published commentary has addressed the question, how did Khrushchev see these missiles serving the function of deterring a US invasion?

The first part of the answer is inescapable. To help protect distant Cuba from invasion, Khrushchev was imitating the fundamental strategy of NATO. He sought to deter non-nuclear attack by threatening local first-use of nuclear weapons in response.

Yet how could Khrushchev hope that such a threat, from Cuba, could be credible at all, credible enough to deter attack? (The same question arises for NATO weapons, in the age of parity. I am going to suggest that it has the same answer in both cases.)

After all, he didn't need to be told--though Kennedy went ahead and told him anyway, in his speech of October 22--that if he fired a missile from Cuba the US would treat that as a missile directed from the Kremlin, and retaliate accordingly.

To initiate nuclear attacks on the US would be potentially suicidal for Khrushchev. Why would the Americans fear that he would give such an order, in the event of their attacking Cuba?

The answer is, they didn't, very much. Their main fear was that their attack might trigger the launch of a Soviet nuclear missile without an intervening order from Khrushchev, against Khrushchev's wishes.

A third significant revelation in the last two years--based on recent testimony by McNamara, confirmed by ExComm transcripts--is that he took very seriously the possibility that a medium-range missile (MRBM) would be launched against the US in the event of a US non-nuclear air or ground attack against Cuba.

But his fear was not so much that General Secretary Khrushchev would deliberately order missiles to be fired, under any circumstances. Repeatedly in recent interviews and discussions McNamara has emphasized that what worried him was the possible action of a "Soviet second lieutenant" in Cuba acting without orders to launch a missile in the heat of an American attack on his own unit elsewhere in Cuba.

Even though he saw the probability of such an event as "very low...maybe one in fifty" that prospect was enough, in his own mind--and he felt sure that President Kennedy agreed--to preclude the choice of an air strike or invasion, in face of the very possibility that some of the missiles were operational. And that possibility could not be excluded from the earliest days of the crisis.

To say this is to say that the President and the Secretary of Defense felt effectively deterred from air attack or invasion of Cuba, by the presence of the missiles: just as--we now know--Khrushchev hoped. Medium-range missiles in Cuba deterred non-nuclear attack on Cuba--because those missiles were stationed in the potential combat zone--in a way that comparable numbers of ICBMs in the Soviet Union would not.

In effect, McNamara feared Khrushchev's possible loss of control over these weapons under conditions of combat in Cuba. It was a fear that Khrushchev could not reliably prevent the possible firing of a missile stationed in Cuba, in the event of a US non-nuclear attack in the vicinity of such weapons.

That concern was no layman's fantasy. By that time in his career, Secretary of Defense McNamara had good reason to know the limits on his own practical control of personnel and weapons, even in the nuclear sphere. (As a command and control specialist, I myself had reported hair-raising tales of the looseness of American controls to McGeorge Bundy in his first month in the White House). He simply assumed that Khrushchev's control had similar limits.

Some Soviet experts would have disputed him; the image of Soviet command relationships among specialists in those days portrayed obsessive centralised control, iron discipline, Godlike authority, both over Soviet and "satellite" officials and troops.

Hence no American (<sup>apparent</sup> not even McNamara) so much as imagined, when a U-2 was shot down by a Soviet SAM on the climactic Saturday of the crisis, that a Soviet officer had taken first blood without authorization from Khrushchev, indeed against his wishes. Nor that Khrushchev had been unable to prevent his Third World ally Fidel Castro from risking the survival of the Soviet Union by firing at American planes.

Yet so it was. McNamara's apprehension about the possible "initiative" of a Soviet nuclear missile officer in Cuba was not misplaced. Indeed, had McNamara known at the time the extent to which control of non-nuclear operations had slipped away from civilian leaders on both sides, it could only have confirmed his concern.

What he feared a Soviet junior officer might do with a nuclear missile if his region of Cuba was under direct attack was what a Soviet subordinate did do with a surface-to-air missile in the presence over Cuba of a high-flying U-2 reconnaissance plane, Saturday morning October 27.

In any case, it follows that the effective deterrent against invasion posed by Khrushchev's deployment of nuclear missiles to the territory of Cuba was the tacit, perhaps inadvertent threat of

his own loss of control: the implicit threat of an unauthorized missile firing by a subordinate commander under attack.

That threat depended essentially on the ground-based "forward" location of the weapons, where their crews would inevitably come under direct attack, or fear it imminently, in the event of American invasion or non-nuclear airstrike.

Here, then, is the functional link between the medium-range missiles (MRBMs) that Khrushchev sent to Cuba and the short-range nuclear missile forces (SNF) and nuclear artillery that have been stationed in Europe since the mid-Fifties.

To be sure, the analogy is even closer to the intermediate-range Pershing II and cruise missiles that were recently removed from Germany under the INF agreement. But contrary to most analysis, it is not the range of the weapon that is functionally essential, but its location--in a potential combat zone--hence its vulnerability to attack or capture and to a "use it or lose it" mentality among its local commanders.

After all, any use of short-range nuclear weapons in Europe, whether authorized or not, is highly likely to lead in short order to the launching of longer-range weapons that can hit the Soviet Union. So the SNF are a tripwire for strategic weapons, just as the US ground troops in Europe are a tripwire for the SNF that accompany them.

The strategy that Khrushchev chose in 1962 to deter invasion of Cuba was the strategy that the US pressed on NATO in the mid-Fifties to deter invasion of West Germany and Western Europe. It is the strategy which President Bush is pressing Chancellor Kohl to maintain and "modernize" today. Indeed, we can better understand the specifics of the NATO strategy in the light of Khrushchev's "defense" of Cuba.

It is a strategy of deterring non-nuclear attack on an ally or client by threatening to initiate tactical nuclear warfare. More specifically, these first-use threats are implemented and made credible--especially against an opponent that could retaliate with nuclear weapons--by stationing nuclear weapons directly on the soil and relatively near the borders of the country being "defended."

An additional element is to accompany the weapons with sizeable numbers of one's own troops in the ally's territory, to make it still more plausible that either the national authorities or local commanders will use the tactical nuclear weapons to "protect" these national units or to avenge their loss. (Khrushchev, it now appears, sent 40,000 Soviet troops along with the missiles. The US keeps over 300,000 troops in West Europe as a "tripwire.")

see  
Israel  
(= German  
weapons)

Weapons and troops so placed in the path of any attacking force pose an inherent threat of possible nuclear launches that are uncontrolled and unauthorized by national-level commanders. Under conditions of nuclear parity, that implicit threat can be far more credible than the most explicit commitment that national authorities will deliberately initiate first-use.

Can it be credible enough to be deterrent? In Cuba, it was.

The Cuban Missile Crisis involved the strongest challenge to any deterrent nuclear forces--Soviet MRBMs in Cuba--to occur in the nuclear era. It was the one time when the commanders of one superpower were poised for and actively contemplating imminent attack on part of the nuclear forces of the other.

And in that test, the Soviets' implicit threat of unauthorized action--whether Khrushchev had ever consciously intended such a threat or not--operated strongly on the mind of the opposing Commander-in-Chief and his second in command, according to the latter's direct testimony.

There can be little doubt, to be short about it, that the short-range nuclear missiles and nuclear artillery on both sides of the borders in Europe--along with forward-based aircraft-- are just as effectively deterrent, and for exactly the same reason.

The often-cited notion that a President in Washington would be much more willing to order such weapons launched, because he hoped to keep the resulting two-sided nuclear war limited within the borders of Germany, is at most a small and implausible part of that reason. A President who believed that could believe anything.

What is far more plausible is that in face of overwhelming attack some of these forward-based weapons would be fired because local commanders would fire them, from a variety of motives. That is credible, because it is all too true.

In fact, given the nuclear stand-off between the two Pacts, no other elements of either side's nuclear posture are remotely so credible for first-use. Not carrier aircraft or cruise missiles (though these would be closest); certainly not submarines or home-based missiles or bombers.

One could well conclude that these vulnerable, ground-based short-range nuclear forces are essential to the effective credibility of a strategy relying on threats of initiating and, if necessary, escalating nuclear warfare. That calculation underlies the Bush Administration position.

It is true--for NATO weapons and probably for Warsaw Pact forces as well-- that sergeants and lieutenants at the firing positions of SNF and nuclear artillery confront locks on the nuclear weapons, so-called Permissive Action Links, which prevent crews from firing them, initially, without codes from higher command.

But how much higher? That is a secret. One thing, however, is sure: it is not the President, or any commander in Washington, who monopolizes those codes, as the public is led to imagine. Nor are they held tight by a four-star general at NATO Headquarters. Division or corps command is a possible locus: regiment, even battalion not out of the question, depending on the weapons, and perhaps on conditions of alert.

All of these levels of command are subject to non-nuclear attack in the earliest minutes or hours of actual conflict, and subject to being overrun in hours or days. Anyone attacking them would be right to worry about nuclear detonations, authorized or not. And so would their own national authorities. And all the rest of us.

Yet the attack could come anyway. That too is a lesson of the Cuban Missile Crisis. That dress rehearsal for superpower war, that field test of crisis stability under near-combat conditions, demonstrates both sides of the issues raised by the short-range nuclear weapons in Europe.

Of course, since November 9, 1989, the likelihood of a Warsaw Pact offensive into West Europe spearheaded by Soviet tanks has come to seem virtually impossible, so long as Gorbachev's present policies prevail. But that does not mean that armed conflict in the still highly-armed neighborhood of West and East Germany is totally ruled out, whether in the long run or even the short.

Conflict in East Europe is, if anything, more likely than before (we have just seen civil war in Rumania, and the resurgence of territorial and ethnic disputes in the Balkans and elsewhere) with the possibility of expansion and spillover. Direct involvement of Soviet troops in such a conflict would almost surely require a successor to Gorbachev in power. Western involvement, amazingly, might not require new officials; the French foreign minister last month, seconded by the US Secretary of State, proposed the possibility of armed involvement by Western forces or "volunteers"--along with Soviet intervention!--into the fighting in Rumania.

Spillover into the regions where US nuclear weapons are deployed might be very unlikely. But what excuse is there for permitting the slightest possibility of this, by maintaining weapons in that historic arena which, in connection with such conflicts, lack any conceivable legitimate function? (Whatever the

imagined legitimacy of nuclear threats in deterring Soviet blitzkrieg, it certainly does not extend to nuclear threats or nuclear war in circumstances like these).

To believe that their presence in an area of historic conflict is tolerable must be to believe that highest-level self-control and operational control in crises is absolute, quite literally absolute. And the Cuban Missile Crisis disproves that.

The Cuban Missile Crisis does show that extended deterrence, the use of first-use nuclear threats against non-nuclear attack against non-nuclear attack, can work. Up to a point. It also shows how it could fail. In 1962 it could have failed despite leaders on both sides who really were "determined" to avoid losing control and going to war.

And if this strategy fails in Europe, it can blow the lid off the Northern Hemisphere. That is the trouble with the strategy, and with the Bush Administration's position. That was true before the Wall came down, and it is still true.

The lesson I indicated in the first section of this paper is all the more pointed in the light of the revelations mentioned in this third part.

On the one hand, what McNamara's recent testimony implies is that both he and--after a day or two's reflection--President Kennedy, desperately anxious to avoid nuclear war, were secretly determined to avoid at all costs an air attack or invasion of Cuba that might bring it about. If this inference is correct, their strategy and aims were considerably more cautious than some others in the ExComm believed them to be.

On the basis of other evidence (not discussed here) both McNamara and Kennedy seem clearly to have been ready to offer a public trade--the mutual withdrawal of US warheads in Turkey along with Soviet missiles in Cuba--rather than to carry out the air strike or invasion they were ostentatiously preparing.

In short, though no commentator seems to have drawn the blunt inference, both the threat implicit in these preparations and Robert Kennedy's explicit ultimatum to Ambassador Dobrynin on the night of October 27--threatening an air strike in 48 hours and rejecting any possibility of a public trade--appear to have been, in the eyes of the President, enormous bluffs.

Moreover, he expected them to fail, and almost surely intended to follow them with major concessions to end the crisis, including an offer publicly to withdraw the Turkish missiles.

And yet: the moral of the tale told in my Op-Ed piece above is that despite all these private resolutions, deterrence came within hours of breaking down.

Despite the President's conscious determination to avoid a war with Soviet forces, his willingness to do almost anything--even make humiliating public concessions--rather than to test the discipline of Soviet missilemen by attacking them, John Kennedy could have found himself doing just that on Sunday, October 28, if Cuban anti-aircraft gunners had been closer to their marks on Saturday afternoon.

The President's bluffs--and Khrushchev's, too--came close to exploding. Contrary to their wishes and expectations, and in ways they neither controlled nor were aware of at the time, Kennedy and McNamara might well have found themselves, a few hours after Robert Kennedy's threats to Dobrynin, taking the actions and getting the war they were anxious to avoid. And it could have had, in the end, the nuclear consequences that they most feared.

Khrushchev's clever strategy did not end well for him; but it risked, and barely avoided, far worse. Could the same strategy in Europe--now being doggedly defended by the Bush Administration -- go so badly?

We could already rule that out--even before the change in Soviet doctrine and deployment and then, the opening of the Wall--the possibility of a premeditated, aggressive surprise attack by Soviet forces "out of the blue," for the purpose of taking over Western Europe. That was no more a realistic concern under Brezhnev or Khrushchev than it is under Gorbachev. If that were the only way that Soviet tanks might confront NATO SNF, there would be little to worry about.

When Pentagon planners postulated a Soviet blitzkrieg offensive against West Germany--or when Soviet tank divisions in East Germany rehearsed such a "counteroffensive," as they have frequently done in training maneuvers over the last generation--both sides had contingencies in mind that were considerably more realistic, though their planned responses were not. (All this, of course, has been overtaken by recent events).

If an uprising in East Germany should have led to fighting between East German troops and Soviet divisions; if West German units should find they could not bear to watch Germans being slaughtered by Russians, and prepare to or do cross the border to intervene; if Soviet tank divisions in East Germany, not having yet abandoned their operational plans and "set" of the last generation, should have launched an offensive counterattack into West Germany...then the discipline of American and West German nuclear artillerymen and missilemen near the borders would quickly be tested en masse, perhaps fatally.

Again, this was no layman's fantasy (though this particular sequence is rapidly becoming, or has already become since November 1989, a former military concern: unless Gorbachev should be replaced by a hardliner within the next year). For many years American and NATO planners regarded this sequence of events not just as one among many ways that conflict might arise between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, but as perhaps the most likely of dangerous contingencies.

An authoritative article in the most recent issue of Foreign Affairs starts by alluding to this traditionally secret concern. ["Central European Security," Summer 1989, by Henry Owen and Edward C. Meyer: the latter having been Army Chief of Staff under Carter and Reagan, the former head of the Policy Planning Staff of the State Department under Johnson and Ambassador-at-large under Carter.] It begins (p. 22):

"The threat of war in Central Europe still exists. One does not have to credit Soviet leaders with an intent to attack Western Europe to believe this. The peoples of Eastern Europe are no more satisfied today with Soviet dominance than they were before 1914 with Austrian and Russian rule. Nor is it yet clear that the Soviet rulers are more ready to yield control of this region than were the Romanovs or the Hapsburgs. [This last judgment, of course, is now overtaken.]

Indeed, central Europe remains second only to the Middle East in its potential for conflicts that could embroil the great powers."

The unstated link between unrest and "war" in this passage is presumably something like the sequence described above, which includes some form of Western intervention into East Europe (as suggested in December, for Rumania, by the French Foreign Minister). What the authors do not explain is just how traditional US and NATO nuclear first-use policy--which they propose to maintain and protect against Western public discontent(as does President Bush and many centrist commentators even after the events of November and December)--relates helpfully, or legitimately, to this plausible picture of the continuing "threat."

Today as I write this--January 2, 1990--Tom Wicker's column in the New York Times salutes the new year and decade with this comment:

"We face, in fact, a changed and not a new world; and in some ways, it's more nearly an old world predating the cold war that has come to an end.

The German problem is certainly not new, though it now arises in a different context. The conflicts of Eastern

Europe, once the confining cloak of Communist rule has been thrown off, may well be reawakened in all their ancient malignities. Mikhail Gorbachev's struggle with the dissident republics of his forcefully built empire is a magnification of a problem that has plagued the USSR almost from its inception."

Suppose that in the next year or two, independence movements in the USSR like those that have revolutionised East Europe should lead to a hardline replacement of Gorbachev by a leader and faction determined to preserve empire not only in the USSR itself but in parts of East Europe. Administration officials, speaking on background, have not only imagined, they have come close to predicting such a sequence.

As illustrated by events that occurred--and still others that were postulated--in Rumania last month, December, 1989, a complex and ambiguous combination of civil war, revolution and international intervention could result. If that conflict originated or spilled over into East or West Germany, it would be taking place among the most heavily nuclear-armed units in the world.

That really should be changed. And not some years from now. Starting to ~~negotiate~~ today to remove such weapons promptly from both sides of the border would not be too soon. It is what the Soviets and West Germans have proposed, against the resistance of the Bush Administration: which should hear on this point from the Congress and the public.

A lesson for NATO, and the American public, from a crisis 27 years ago: It was as reckless and irresponsible for the American and West European governments to bring short-range nuclear weapons into a potential zone of conflict in the Fifties, and to keep them there till today (and for the Soviets to match such deployments in the Eighties) as it was for Nikita Khrushchev to send medium-range missiles to Cuba.

More generally--in the absence finally of the threat ("if," as Wicker says in his column today, "there ever was one") of a Hitlerian blitzkrieg by Soviet tank columns against West Europe--it should at last be seen as profoundly unacceptable to defend any borders or national interests by the threat of deliberate first-use of nuclear weapons, still less by the tacit threat of losing control of nuclear weapons, under any circumstances whatever.

That rules out anything close to present US strategy or nuclear deployment in Western Europe or South Korea and on ~~US~~ surface naval vessels. Likewise, covert nuclear dimensions of US intervention policies throughout the Third World. Likewise, the "deterrence" policies of a number of lesser nuclear states.

*Handwritten:* Hyp: ~~Israel~~, as "Crazy State" which has no threat of loss of control.  
(But Arab War shows even SA can refrain from CW; and ~~Israel~~ from retal.)

Daniel Ellsberg  
January 2, 1990

GRANT PROPOSAL FOR WRITING PROJECT ON  
THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS AND CURRENT NATO POLICY:  
SOURCES OF PSYCHOSOCIAL RISK IN THE NUCLEAR ERA

Why restudy the Cuban Missile Crisis?

Because it was the Three Mile Island of the nuclear weapons era: the closest approach to a catastrophic nuclear war.

Because there is now more data available on high-level decisionmaking considerations in this crisis--including, for the first time, inside information on Soviet and Cuban decisions--than for any other; and I can integrate these data--many of which have emerged only in the last two years, some in the past month--with hitherto-unrevealed findings from my participation in the crisis and my own later official study of it.

Because the most authoritative current interpretations --still dominated by the foreign policy equivalents of nuclear power plant executives--are inadequate, mistaken or dangerously misleading, in particular misunderstanding and underestimating the risk both of non-nuclear and of nuclear war.

Because the detailed examination now possible of this episode reveals psychosocial patterns and motivations among men in power--e.g., deliberate choice of high-risk confrontations with a chance of disaster, "gambling with catastrophe," in preference to accepting limited but humiliating personal defeats--that continue to be of utmost relevance to prospective conflicts in the post-Cold War era (as in Panama, in the last week of the Eighties).

Because the urgency of seizing the current, unprecedented opportunity to denuclearize foreign policy and to achieve the near-abolition of nuclear weapons can best be understood in terms of the real risks of this earlier "close call."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The opportunity is based on Gorbachev's demonstrated willingness to act on his "new way of thinking in the nuclear era" by a combination of restraint, unilateral moves and serious proposals aimed at ending the division of Europe and armed

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confrontation within it, letting go of the Soviet empire in East Europe, reducing and restructuring non-nuclear forces to "defensive sufficiency" and nuclear forces to mutual "minimum deterrence" as a transition to the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Already the resulting astonishing changes in East Europe and the Soviet Union have effectively eliminated the threat of a Soviet blitzkrieg in Europe, till now the principal legitimating rationale for NATO reliance on nuclear first-use threat and thus for most US nuclear weapons.

This could lead to the mutual abandonment of nuclear first-use threats and, perhaps by the end of the century, the mutual destruction of the tactical and strategic nuclear weapons that support them: if political leaders in the US, as well, could be persuaded in this new international context to take seriously and then to adopt and act upon comparable new principles of relating and behaving internationally.

That this is not impossible (it is certainly not automatic, nor even likely short of major political effort) is shown by the fact that a former Secretary of Defense has recently espoused what amounts to a concise statement of the themes of "the new way of thinking" as his own proposals.

In the Annual Spring Lecture of the Center for Psychological Studies in the Nuclear Age (May 15, 1989: Center Review Fall 1989) Robert S. McNamara urged a code for an international peacekeeping organization that would "provide that political interests be pursued through diplomacy, not military threats or use of force, that military forces reduce their arms and restructure themselves to be defensive, that the superpowers refrain from intervening in regional conflicts, and that political disputes and other global problems are solved through international collaboration. In principle...no nation's nuclear force need be larger than necessary to deter cheating, i.e. to deter secret building of new weapons...the number of warheads required for such deterrence would not exceed a few hundred."

McNamara concluded: "If we succeed, we can enter the 21st century [the end of this decade] with...a totally different military strategy: one of mutual security instead of war-fighting; with vastly smaller nuclear forces, no more than a few hundred weapons--in place of fifty thousand; with conventional forces in balance and in defensive rather than offensive postures; and, therefore, with a dramatically lower risk that our nation will be destroyed by unintended conflict."

The premise of this study is that a realistic knowledge of the actual dangers of the nuclear era up to now--best exemplified by

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the hidden history of the Cuban Missile Crisis--can contribute to motivating the painful and difficult political-psychosocial-moral work of individual and social change needed to about the precise transformation McNamara envisions here.

(It is no accident, I believe, that the man pressing this vision, Robert McNamara, experienced the Cuban Missile Crisis at its very center, and of all the surviving participants has most consistently emphasized the profound impact on his thinking of his then-unequalled sense of its real dangers.)

### Case Study of a Near Miss

Few have ever disagreed with the judgment that the Cuban Missile Crisis was the most dangerous episode of the nuclear era. But just how dangerous was it?

"Not very," is the emerging consensus of specialists in the subjects, who proceed to draw the related conclusion that the risks of the era as a whole have been, in reality, low and have been getting steadily lower for the beginning.<sup>2</sup>

I believe that these experts are wrong on both counts, dangerously so.

Despite the fact--revealed in recent testimony--that both US and Soviet leaderships already, in 1962, felt strongly deterred not only from nuclear but from non-nuclear conflict with each other's forces, we came as close to superpower armed conflict and possible nuclear launches that year, I believe, as Three Mile Island or Chernobyl came to a core meltdown of a nuclear reactor. Far closer, as in those cases, than any experts had earlier imagined possible, or in this case, than most experts yet perceive. Unacceptably close.

I believe that the same defense and foreign policy experts correspondingly underestimate the lesser but significant risks in other nuclear crises, both past and easily-imaginable future ones. By the same token, they fail to recognize either the urgency or the most relevant ways of reducing such risks, including opportunities offered at this moment to the NATO Alliance.

These judgments are based in part on my own direct participation in the Cuban Missile Crisis but much more on my highly-classified official study of that and other nuclear crises two years later--most of the findings from which have not yet become available to other analysts--and on my subsequent

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<sup>2</sup> Thus, McGeorge Bundy, Danger and Survival: Choices About the Bomb in the First Fifty Years, published late 1988, on the Missile Crisis: "I have argued that the risk was small, given the prudence and the unchallenged final control of the two leaders." (p. 461). And on his next to last page (616) the judgment: "Nuclear weapons have been with the world since 1945, and each ten-year period in that time has turned out to be less dangerous than the one before it....Still more plainly, the decades after Cuba have been less dangerous than before." On the preceding page he estimates that the risk of nuclear catastrophe in Cuba may have been "one in one hundred."

experience and study of escalation in Vietnam, as well as on information that has been newly revealed in the last two years.

In October 1962 I participated in the high-level staffwork of the Cuban Missile Crisis, serving on two of the three Working Groups reporting to the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (ExComm).

I went into that crisis as a specialist in nuclear war planning--I had drafted the Kennedy Administration's top secret guidance for the general nuclear war plans that became operational that year--and an expert on the procedures by which the execution of those plans might be ordered, either with or--as I had discovered to be possible-- without the immediate authorization of the President.

I came out of the crisis feeling I had experienced the most likely way a thermonuclear war would come to pass, if it ever did. The way deterrence on both sides could fail. The way in which the plans and procedures I had studied and helped design might actually come to be acted out. A dress rehearsal for nuclear catastrophe, on the scale of a million Hiroshimas.

I determined to study that episode, and any others like it, with the best official access to information that could be achieved, to discover the faults in a system that had let us come this far along the path to a war that, surely, neither side had earlier intended or desired.

This does not mean that I set out to examine this incident --when I had found sponsorship for such a study within the government a year later--with the presupposition that nuclear war had been very close, highly probable, or missed by a very narrow margin. On the contrary, I had believed during the height of the crisis--just as many authorities do today--that the actual probability of a major war, let alone a nuclear war, erupting momentarily was extremely low.

As the blockade had tightened on Cuba, I thought then--like certain "hawks" then and now--that Khrushchev, vastly outgunned both in the Caribbean and in strategic nuclear arms, "had" to back down and could be counted on to do so, almost surely before the threshold of hot war was crossed.

Looking back just a few years later--after studying crises including this one, then participating in several that took us to war--I came to feel I had been very mistaken.

In 1964 I spent over six months studying this and other nuclear crises with interdepartmental access to highly-classified information on this and other nuclear crises that was then virtually unprecedented and may still be so today. A sponsoring

committee of officials at the deputy secretary level in State, Defense, CIA and the Staff Directorate of the Joint Chiefs of Staff assured me access to closely-held documentation in each of their respective agencies.

As I put together information some of which the highest officials had not known at the time and no one had seen whole before, it began to be clear that the overall chance of the military equivalent of a nuclear "meltdown"--without being close to certain or even as likely as not--had been significantly greater than I had supposed.

To my surprise, I discovered this inference of a "near miss" to be comparably strong in the case of at least one earlier episode, the Quemoy Crisis of 1957, which was not commonly regarded by the public or scholars to have been a nuclear crisis. (In more recent research, I have uncovered a number of other instances: see my Introduction to Protest and Survive, attached).

Moreover, in looking at a larger number of crises, not all of which had a nuclear dimension, I found patterns and phenomena of decisionmaking in crises--including psychological reactions to events threatening humiliation, and failures in understanding, communication and in control of forces--that suggested that the potential danger in Cuba or Quemoy was not peculiar to the particular personalities involved nor their particular strategic context.

After reporting orally my major findings to the committee of departmental planners in the fall of 1964, I accepted an invitation that came at that time to continue my study of crisis decision-making from even further inside, as a highest-level civil servant (GS-18) serving as Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs) observing, by participating in, the secret escalation of US intervention in Vietnam.

My preoccupation with Vietnam turned out to last 11 years. That included two years as a field observer for the Embassy in Vietnam, two years helping write and analysing lessons from the top secret history of our decision-making (the Pentagon Papers) and six years working to end our involvement, in particular by revealing what I knew about it.

What I learned of crises and hot war in that time--11 years watching vastly outgunned Vietnamese and hopelessly stalemated Americans both refusing to back down, instead crossing threshold after threshold of escalating violence--further confirmed what I had discovered in my crisis study of 1964:

We had come much closer to stumbling into a major war in 1962 than I had realized at the time, or most other analysts recognize now. And it could happen again.

One major body of evidence leading to this conclusion--one of several lines of argument I will present in this study--was first revealed publicly by me in an Op-Ed piece in the New York Times on the 25th anniversary of the crisis. Rather than summarize that brief essay, which is already very condensed, I will reproduce it here:

Since this essay was published, a number of Soviet officials have added their voices to Burlatsky's, confirming Khrushchev's lack of control of Castro's antiaircraft or, on the morning of October 27, 1962, the actions of his own Soviet-manned SAM-site. [The latest data on this point have just appeared, in the Winter 1989/90 issue of International Security: "Essence of Revision: Moscow, Havana, and the Cuban Missile Crisis," Bruce J. Allyn, James G. Blight, and David A. Welch.]

In effect, Khrushchev had no more practical control over the gunners and missilemen firing from Cuba at American planes on Saturday, October 27, 1962 than Gorbachev had over the Chernobyl reactor crew.

Yet not only was Kennedy ignorant of this, even as a possibility, at the time, but his then-national security assistant McGeorge Bundy seems unaware of it to the present day: to the considerable detriment of his analysis, which aims to be reassuring. Thus he argues in Danger and Survival, published in late 1988:

"Yet it would be a mistake to conclude that the slide to unlimited escalation was only one move away on Saturday night. Let us look again at the prospects as they stood then. The worst that we could expect from Khrushchev that night was that he would reject our message and somehow try to extend the dickering he had begun on Friday, but he was in no position to take violent action...He certainly did not stand to gain by maintaining or increasing the challenge created by the killing of Major Anderson the day before, and he had been warned of the dangers in that course...It was unlikely then that Khrushchev would risk a dangerous next step. Control of any escalation still rested with Kennedy..."

It is almost painful, or frightening, to read this account in the present awareness that it was not by Khrushchev's orders or desires that Major Anderson had been attacked. Nor, indeed, was it Khrushchev who was planning to take violent action the next day against American pilots, but Castro: whose antiaircraft attacks were sure to be misinterpreted again by Bundy and Kennedy as an increased "challenge" by Khrushchev himself.

Kennedy's warning had been misdirected, as was his planned response to the next attacks. Without realizing it, he was threatening, and planning, to kill Russians--at surface-to-air missile sites, and possibly at nuclear missile sites--if and when Cubans--under Cuban, not Soviet command--shot down another recon plane.

Unlimited escalation was not inevitable that Saturday night, but the fateful slide toward it, the launching of a cycle of violence, was indeed but one move away. And, dangerously unknown to Kennedy then--or yet, it seems, to Bundy--the move was to be Castro's: youngest of the three leaders, ignored, enraged and humiliated by both the others, the one whose country was facing direct attack and being overflown by hostile planes...

Nor was lack of control limited to the Soviet/Cuban side. On that same climactic Saturday Kennedy was informed that a US Strategic Air Command U-2 had "strayed accidentally" into Soviet northern airspace (in the same general area where the KAL-007 was shot down in 1983), causing Soviet fighters to scramble in pursuit: possibly, Kennedy was advised, in the belief that it was the precursor to an American first strike.

Bundy himself mentions a few more American "loose ends" that he and his boss did not know at the time, suggesting "imperfect crisis management" (p. 459):

"Only in recent years, for example, have I learned that air force generals seem to have taken it on themselves to give their alert orders in unencrypted language so that their message would more certainly reach Moscow, or that the naval campaign of surveillance over Soviet submarines may have been prosecuted well beyond the immediate requirements of the quarantine [e.g., forcing Soviet submarines to surface, in part by dropping "small" depth charges], or that the army's plans for invasion probably included the movement of tactical nuclear weapons to Cuba.

It may well be, as Bundy says, that each leader "was determined not to let matters spin out of control" (p. 453) but matters were spinning out of control nevertheless, more than they knew.

When the Cuban Missile Crisis is adequately understood, it seems as unwarranted to conclude, with Bundy, that "the risks that might arise as one step followed another...were probably overestimated on the crucial Saturday," or that the overall risks in this or other such crises, past or future, can be seen as "small, given the prudence and the unchallenged final control of the two leaders," as to say the same thing for the risk of a core meltdown at Chernobyl.

### My Current Writing Project

A great deal of additional information on the Cuban Missile Crisis has become available in the quarter-century since my 1964 study. In particular, the coincidence of the onset of Soviet glasnost and the 25th anniversary of the crisis stimulated unprecedented symposia of former US and Soviet officials.

Alongside these, a public television series, important Freedom of Information Act requests, and significant memoirs, have resulted in a flood of significant new data just in the last two years. All this has reawakened intense scholarly interest, controversy and creativity. This is true, to a lesser degree, for other nuclear crises as well.

Earlier research grants over the past several years have permitted me to benefit from reading nearly all of this material, which has reshaped many aspects of my understanding of the crisis. But this reading has also made me aware that a great deal of the data made available to me in 1964 has still not publicly been released,<sup>3</sup> and that almost all current analyses and inferences published about the crisis suffer significantly from this lack.

It is clearly time for me to contribute to the ongoing active discussion of the Cuban Missile Crisis and of the nuclear era as a whole by writing up and disseminating the relevant data from my earlier official, classified study--which dealt with a number of other high-level crises, in addition to Cuba--along with my most recent hypotheses, speculations and conclusions reflecting both the new and the old information.

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<sup>3</sup> One of the historians most knowledgeable of the available materials, Marc Trachtenberg, has specifically drawn attention (International Security, Summer 1985) to the unavailability to scholars of two important documents: "the extensive, almost verbatim notes that Paul Nitze took of meetings during the crisis"; and an analysis requested by the National Security Council on August 23, 1962--well before the missiles were photographed on October 14--"of the probable military, political and psychological impact of the establishment in Cuba of either surface-to-air or surface-to-surface missiles which could reach the U.S." Of the latter Trachtenberg says, "It is unclear whether such a study was ever written; an attempt to locate it via the Freedom of Information Act proved unsuccessful." The Harvard researchers James Blight and David Welch were told by Paul Nitze in 1987 that he had lost his notes of the meetings.

Fortunately, I have not lost my own complete notes, from 1964, on Nitze's notes, nor on the other study in question.

I plan to spend at least the next six months doing this, with articles, research memoranda and a book as the eventual product.

My findings will confront most of the currently accepted interpretations and stand them on their head.

The argument in the Op-Ed essay reproduced above as to why Khrushchev ended the crisis so abruptly on American terms is one example of this. One further example--not hitherto revealed publicly--might be cited here, relating to the prior question of why there was a crisis at all.

In a section headed "What Caused the Crisis?" in their 1989 study On the Brink, the Kennedy School scholars James Blight and David Welch observe: "Khrushchev's decision to deploy missiles in Cuba was only one half of the reason why there was a crisis in October 1962. The other half was the Kennedy Administration's unwillingness to tolerate them." (p. 120)

On the reasoning behind Khrushchev's decision there has been a dramatic transformation of opinion based on revelations of the last two years (see my next section). This has not occurred with respect to the US contribution to the making of a crisis, on which all published accounts, up through the latest ones, agree.

On the basis of interviews with former officials, all scholars have concluded--though with some puzzlement--that in the eyes of participants no "decision" seemed necessary or was consciously made on the issue that Blight and Welch raise. The "intolerable" nature of the secret Soviet deployment, hence the appropriateness of using all necessary military means to remove them, is reported to have been immediately self-evident and unproblematic to all American officials involved.

Blight and Welch summarize a number of recent interviews with participants and joint discussions among former officials and scholars in terms which fully accord with every other published account over the last quarter-century.

The policymakers, Blight and Welch report, "it appears, never seriously debated the issue. For them, it was simply axiomatic that the missiles could not be tolerated. Hawks' Cay conference participants heard Maxwell Taylor put the issue to them with perfect clarity: 'There was no question about the problem,' he said. 'The President announced his objective within an hour after seeing the photographs of the missiles. It was to get the missiles out of Cuba.'"

"When pressed by the scholars, the policymakers appealed to a variety of considerations to explain why the missiles could not be tolerated....But for whatever reasons, it is clear that no one

in the ExComm argued that the missiles did not have to be removed from Cuba...To question the unacceptability of Soviet missiles in Cuba seemed to the ExComm members an abstract, ahistorical and naive exercise."

Blight and Welch make clear their understanding, shared by all analysts, that the President's reaction to the news was not determinative of the others' but merely characteristic, a common judgment independently arrived at by every other official involved.

Thus the American contribution to the existence of the crisis, its perception as a "national security crisis" legitimating and requiring a military response, is not attributed to the President himself. It is seen as a unanimous group response, spontaneous and inevitable, dictated by a Cold War Zeitgeist.

Now, President Kennedy, as it turned out, was not told of the photographs and their import by McGeorge Bundy till 8 AM Tuesday morning, October 16. The first meeting of the officials he wished to consult--later designated the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (ExComm)--took place at 11:50 AM, or several hours after General Taylor reports the President had announced his objective (which Kennedy reiterated at the end of this first hour's meeting).

But nearly every official present at that meeting had been told the news on the evening before, October 15. Curiously, although various accounts of the crisis have described the exact circumstances under which these dozen or so officials were given the information, there is not one line in the literature, reflecting interviews and memoirs, that describes the initial judgement of a single one of these men that first evening as to what the US should or should not do.

No evidence has ever been published, and none seems to have been probed for, as to what any of these officials thought, or said to each other, in the 15 hours or so before they heard the President's view of the situation.

It happens that my own interviews of several officials in 1964 did bear on this point, as does my copy of Paul Nitze's notes on the ExComm meetings. [Nitze gave me access to his notes in 1964; no other researcher seems to have seen them.] These data are in considerable contrast to the longstanding consensual account.

Here, for example, is a verbatim copy of my notes from 1964 paraphrasing part of my interview with Paul Nitze, who at the time of the crisis was Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs). The passage relates to the

evening of Monday, October 15, when Nitze and Secretary of State Rusk learned that photographs taken the day before and analyzed that afternoon had definitely confirmed the presence of Soviet missiles on Cuba:

Nitze was at State with [Secretary of State] Rusk in dinner with Schroeder [foreign minister of West Germany] when Hilsman [Director of Intelligence and Research, State Department] called Rusk. They were in the midst of a discussion of Cuba. Rusk came back very pale. After dinner, he took Nitze out on terrace and told him. They discussed alternatives. Nitze had already thought about problem, concluded that invasion looked very bad--would be a bloody mess--and that air strike looked better; but that too, at that moment, didn't look good (especially a surprise attack, with political repercussions). He didn't immediately consider blockade. He thought we would just have to eat it. Rusk felt about the same way. (He wouldn't necessarily have predicted this reaction). Both agreed, it was a hideous prospect.

To "eat it" was a Nitze idiom, used elsewhere by him in the ExComm transcripts, for "accept it, reluctantly." The records of the crisis do not show Nitze making this judgment again from the day he joined the ExComm group on October 17, a day after the President had announced his determination not to "eat it"; Nitze was later to be counted among the "hawks."

But Secretary of State Rusk was not the only cabinet-level officer whose first response--like Nitze's--was that the missiles would have to be accepted, given the defects of military measures to remove them.

Secretary of Defense McNamara carried that attitude into the first meeting, and--contrary to the generalization reported by Blight and Welch above--he continued to argue for it in subsequent meetings, even after the President had expressed his contrary view.

Thus, my verbatim transcript of the notes Paul Nitze took of the morning meeting of October 17 [no other record of this meeting has been released] shows McNamara commenting "No military threat justifying response." He proceeds to lay out an approach he had presented to the President the day before, which does accept indefinitely the continued presence in Cuba of the missiles already there, while taking steps to prevent their being increased in number and to prevent their being used.

Thus, when McNamara launched his famous advocacy of a blockade, it was not to meet a goal of eventually eliminating the missiles that had just been discovered but simply to prevent further introduction of missiles into Cuba. His proposal, to

which he returned several times, presumed that the missiles already there would be allowed to remain.

He proposed aerial surveillance of the missiles already deployed, to be continued indefinitely into the future, with a warning to the Soviet Union that if there were ever signs that the missiles were about to be launched, the US would respond not only against the missiles in Cuba but against the Soviet Union.

As McNamara had put it on October 16, "Now this alternative doesn't seem to be a very acceptable one, but wait until you work on the others."

As the Secretary of Defense repeatedly emphasized, in front of the President and the rest of the ExComm, he did not "think there is a military problem here" [posed by the Soviet deployment]. Rather, there was a "domestic political problem," raised precisely by the President's statement at a press conference September 13 that if an offensive capability against the US should be emplaced on Cuba, "the United States would act."

The real purpose of the "little package" he had outlined, McNamara explained, was to deal with the "domestic political problem" by fulfilling minimally the "action requirement" in the President's September 13 statement. He pointed out: "We didn't say we'd go in and...kill them, we said we'd act. Well, how will we act? Well, we want to prevent their use," which we would do by the surveillance and warning.

Undersecretary of State George Ball commented, "Yeah, well as far as the American people are concerned, action means military action, period." McNamara pointed to the blockade in his proposal. Ball raised a question whether the actual operation of a blockade "isn't a greater involvement almost than a military action" [i.e., compared to an airstrike] and McNamara agreed that it "might well be."

Correspondingly, Nitze's notes of October 17 show, on the next day McNamara followed his reiteration of his blockade-and-surveillance package with a "Variant. Surveillance. Will attack Soviet Union if preparation to launch against US."

In other words, McNamara's "variant," dropped the blockade, accepted indefinitely not only the missiles already on Cuba but limiting US actions to aerial and electronic surveillance, with offensive action only in the event that the US believed actual missile attack was imminent from Cuba. This implied accepting indefinitely not only the missiles already on Cuba but possible further additional missiles (which a blockade, which McNamara here proposed eschewing, could prevent).

Such a proposition was consistent with McNamara's repeated judgment, with which Bundy says he and "most others" agreed, that it made no difference at all to the strategic balance--it had no strategic impact on the security of the US--if missiles aimed at the US were based in Cuba or in Russia.

Thus the Secretary of Defense. A final citation, from the same page of Nitze's notes on the October 17 meeting. Just before McNamara's comments, Nitze quotes General Maxwell Taylor, as saying: "Why don't we relax about it. Accept it as another target." [I.e., accept the new missile bases on Cuba as semi-permanent, like ICBM bases in the Soviet Union; simply enter them on Strategic Air Command target lists as new counterforce targets to be struck in the event of general nuclear war, along with those in the Soviet Union.] This thought is offered by the only military man on the ExComm, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

All these previously-unreported attitudes focus new attention on the President's own role in defining the situation as a "crisis," on his possible reasons for doing so--including the personal psychological and domestic political pressures that impact specifically on the President rather than on his chief officials--and on his personal influence in setting the terms of discussion in the ExComm from the beginning, and throughout.

In his own initial bent to military action and his determination that the missiles already in Cuba could not be allowed to remain, Kennedy was neither yielding to nor expressing a clear consensus among ExComm members. Responsibility for the risks involved in subsequent actions is his, in much more than a formal sense.

My research will show that a good deal of evidence, from this crisis and many others, can be brought to bear on the vital question: When, and why, can a future president be expected to choose such risks for the nation and the globe in face of a "political" challenge no more compelling of military action than Kennedy's Defense Secretary saw in the Soviet deployment to Cuba?

Or, to bring this right up to date: When might a future president undertake an action as aggressive as President Bush's invasion of Panama in the week before Christmas, 1989, despite risks that might be greater and national security stakes no more compelling than those associated with defiance by General Manuel Noriega?

### Some Policy Implications

My interest in this matter is not now, any more than it was in my crisis study of 1964 or my participation in the Pentagon Papers study in 1967-69, primarily that of an historian. My aim, now as then, is an understanding of events that is not only accurate but relevant to policymaking in ways that could help reduce the risk of nuclear war.

I was drawn back to this episode early in 1989 because it is newly apparent that such an understanding is within reach. Since then even more information has become available, by recent declassification and from former officials and analysts in Moscow and Havana. (I look forward to conducting further interviews myself in a visit to Moscow in January, 1990).

By mid-1989, moreover, my research seemed to have acquired new policy relevance, because it is precisely from the perspective I propose that essential analogies emerge between the Cuban Missile Crisis and the issues in the current intense controversy over short-range nuclear missiles and artillery which threatened to divide the NATO Alliance at the recent NATO Summit in June and is certain to persist over the next several years.

The immediate issue is whether to maintain and "modernize" US and German short-range nuclear missile forces (SNF) in West Germany, or to reduce or eliminate them--along with the more numerous Soviet short-range missiles in East Europe--by an agreement with the Soviets.

Because the Soviets had recently proposed mutual elimination of both SNF and nuclear artillery in Europe, and this is supported by 90% of the German public--a large majority of all parties--elimination of such weapons and perhaps of all nuclear weapons from the continent of Europe had become a live political option for the first time since such weapons were introduced in the mid-Fifties.

But by November 9--the opening of the Berlin Wall, with the tolerance and even encouragement of Gorbachev--a truly revolutionary perspective opened: the prospect no merely of the reduction and defensive restructuring of Soviet forces in East Germany but the removal of Soviet forces from East Europe, along with the reorientation of other East European forces and of Soviet forces in the USSR away from any possibility of a concerted offensive.

In other words, if Gorbachev's present policies persist, then within a few years the single legitimating rationale for NATO nuclear first-use policies will have disappeared.

This does not mean that US tactical nuclear weapons will automatically be withdrawn from Europe as a consequence of the loss of their rationale. On the contrary, the Bush Administration and some of its allies, along with many Establishment opinion-makers, continue to insist on the "need" to maintain US nuclear weapons in Europe and on naval vessels indefinitely, projecting a first-use capability and threat.

Yet with the change in political and military context, the removal of nuclear weapons and even the rejection of first-use doctrine in Europe appears politically possible (to say the least) in a way that has not been true for almost forty years. If achieved, its immediate effect in Europe would be a lasting reduction in the risk of nuclear war erupting in an unpremeditated manner from a future crisis.

This removal in turn--in ways discussed below--would open the way to the rejection of nuclear first-use policies worldwide, and to truly radical mutual reductions in nuclear stockpiles: the worldwide elimination of tactical nuclear weapons (some 25,000 on both sides) and at least a 95% reduction in the over 25,000 strategic weapons on both sides.

Such a 98% reduction from the 50,000 US and Soviet weapons presently deployed to something under 500 on each side (in an untargetable basing mode, primarily on submarines) could be called near-abolition: a transition phase of vastly improved stability on the way to total abolition, which awaits even more thoroughgoing and global adoption of "the new way of thinking." [See my interviews in The Progressive, September 1989, and in Soviet-American News, January 1990. Note that this goal, with the target date of the end of the century, corresponds exactly to the proposals of former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara cited in footnote 1.]

But none of this will come about, or even get underway, without sharp political debate and struggle, in this country as well as in Europe, since the Bush Administration and the Thatcher Government have made it one of their highest foreign policy priorities to avert elimination of nuclear weapons from Europe and to postpone as long as possible even the start of negotiations over reducing such weapons.

To override this inertial resistance in the US Executive Branch, I believe, will require a considerable reconstitution of the antinuclear educational and lobbying public movement and lobbying effort of the early Eighties. (A reconstitution of the mass public movement is currently unlikely, but may not be necessary in the present international context.)

That is not certain to happen without better understanding than is common at present among activists and sympathetic experts

of the urgency of seizing the present unprecedented opportunity to rid Europe of nuclear weapons.

At this point, however, the issues are so poorly discussed in this country that it is scarcely comprehensible why either side feels so strongly about its position: especially in light of the fact that the particular weapons in question are only a fraction of the nuclear weapons available to NATO.

Have short-range missiles and artillery in Europe really been crucial to the credibility of NATO's first-use nuclear threats, as Bush and his lieutenants appear to believe? Have they added, under Cold War conditions, significantly to the risk of nuclear disaster, as the German public fears? Is there any longer, after the opening of the Wall and all that has accompanied that, any legitimate need or excuse for accepting any such risks at all or for maintaining such threats, let alone worrying about their credibility?

I believe the answer to the first two questions is, "Yes," to the last, "No!"

Thus I agree, unsurprisingly, with the position that most Germans and the Soviets took last summer, even before the Wall came down: the SNF should go, on both sides, and the nuclear artillery with them. That seems even more obvious since November.

But one of the reasons these weapons were and are unacceptably dangerous (even though the danger is clearly less than before, with the decline in US-Soviet confrontation) is also the main reason that Bush and the NATO Commanders are right, too, to believe that the short-range land-based nuclear weapons have been effective first-use threats. Which is one major reason why Bush, Thatcher and some others cling to them so fanatically.

These weapons are, indeed, significantly more likely to be launched--in the event of armed conflict taking place on the territory of West Germany than any other element in the NATO panoply of tactical or strategic nuclear weapons. (The term "tactical" for these weapons, by the way, refers to their shorter range--which assures that they would all land in Germany, East or West--not to limits on their explosive power. The Lance warhead, for example, could have the explosive force of 100,000 tons of TNT, equivalent to the power of eight Hiroshima bombs).

The main reason for this greater likelihood of detonation is not one that Bush or NATO officials care to discuss openly. The American public has never heard it officially and might, at first, find it hard to take seriously. Most people would be reluctant to believe that responsible officials could have adopted and maintained an approach so fundamentally reckless.

An informed understanding of the real "deterrent" functioning of these particular weapons is long overdue, both for the public and for most specialists. And there is no better way to grasp the logic of these peculiar instruments of deterrent strategy than to examine closely certain aspects of the Cuban Missile Crisis, as that is now susceptible of being understood.

Crucial to the analogy are several of the most striking revelations of the last two years.

First: it is now accepted that Soviet leaders were convinced, in the spring of 1962, that an American invasion of Cuba was highly likely; they expected it in the fall of 1962.

Second, it is accepted--in a dramatic transformation of consensus opinion among American analysts--that a major motive, at least comparably important to any other, driving Khrushchev's decision to deploy medium- and intermediate-range missiles secretly to Cuba was his desire to avert such an invasion by deterring it. [See the recent article by Allyn, Blight and Welch cited earlier on both these points.]

So new, and important, are these revelations (along with newly-declassified documents disclosing--contrary to continued denials by McNamara and Bundy--serious attention by top American officials including the President to contingency planning and actual preparations for a fall invasion of Cuba prior to the discovery of the missiles: see the important article forthcoming in Diplomatic History by James Hershberg, "Before the 'Missiles of October': Did Kennedy Plan A Military Strike Against Cuba?") that their implications for an overall understanding of the crisis are only beginning to be explored.

In particular, no published commentary has addressed the question, how did Khrushchev see these missiles serving the function of deterring a US invasion?

The first part of the answer is inescapable. To help protect distant Cuba from invasion, Khrushchev was imitating the fundamental strategy of NATO. He sought to deter non-nuclear attack by threatening local first-use of nuclear weapons in response.

Yet how could Khrushchev hope that such a threat, from Cuba, could be credible at all, credible enough to deter attack? (The same question arises for NATO weapons, in the age of parity. I am going to suggest that it has the same answer in both cases.)

After all, he didn't need to be told--though Kennedy went ahead and told him anyway, in his speech of October 22--that if

he fired a missile from Cuba the US would treat that as a missile directed from the Kremlin, and retaliate accordingly.

To initiate nuclear attacks on the US would be potentially suicidal for Khrushchev. Why would the Americans fear that he would give such an order, in the event of their attacking Cuba?

The answer is, they didn't, very much. Their main fear was that their attack might trigger the launch of a Soviet nuclear missile without an intervening order from Khrushchev, against Khrushchev's wishes.

A third significant revelation in the last two years--based on recent testimony by McNamara, confirmed by ExComm transcripts--is that he took very seriously the possibility that a medium-range missile (MRBM) would be launched against the US in the event of a US non-nuclear air or ground attack against Cuba.

But his fear was not so much that General Secretary Khrushchev would deliberately order missiles to be fired, under any circumstances. Repeatedly in recent interviews and discussions McNamara has emphasized that what worried him was the possible action of a "Soviet second lieutenant" in Cuba acting without orders to launch a missile in the heat of an American attack on his own unit elsewhere in Cuba.

Even though he saw the probability of such an event as "very low...maybe one in fifty" that prospect was enough, in McNamara's own mind--and he felt sure that President Kennedy agreed--to preclude the choice of an air strike or invasion, in face of the very possibility that some of the missiles were operational. And that possibility could not be excluded from the earliest days of the crisis.

To say this is to say that the President and the Secretary of Defense felt effectively deterred from air attack or invasion of Cuba, by the presence of the missiles: just as--we now know--Khrushchev hoped. Medium-range missiles in Cuba deterred non-nuclear attack on Cuba--because those missiles were stationed in the potential combat zone--in a way that comparable numbers of ICBMs in the Soviet Union would not.

In effect, McNamara feared Khrushchev's possible loss of control over these weapons under conditions of combat in Cuba. It was a fear that Khrushchev could not reliably prevent the possible firing of a missile stationed in Cuba, in the event of a US non-nuclear attack in the vicinity of such weapons.

That concern was no layman's fantasy. By that time in his career, Secretary of Defense McNamara had good reason to know the limits on his own practical control of personnel and weapons, even in the nuclear sphere. (As a command and control specialist,

I myself had reported hair-raising tales of the looseness of American controls to McGeorge Bundy in his first month in the White House). He simply assumed that Khrushchev's control had similar limits.

Some Soviet experts would have disputed him; the image of Soviet command relationships among specialists in those days portrayed obsessive centralised control, iron discipline, Godlike authority, both over Soviet and "satellite" officials and troops.

Hence no American (not even McNamara) so much as imagined, when a U-2 was shot down by a Soviet SAM on the climactic Saturday of the crisis, that a Soviet officer had taken first blood without authorization from Khrushchev, indeed against his wishes. Nor that Khrushchev had been unable to prevent his Third World ally Fidel Castro from risking the survival of the Soviet Union by firing at American planes.

Yet so it was. McNamara's apprehension about the possible "initiative" of a Soviet nuclear missile officer in Cuba was not misplaced. Indeed, had McNamara known at the time the extent to which control of non-nuclear operations had slipped away from civilian leaders on both sides, it could only have confirmed his concern.

What he feared a Soviet junior officer might do with a nuclear missile if his region of Cuba was under direct attack was what a Soviet subordinate did do with a surface-to-air missile in the presence over Cuba of a high-flying U-2 reconnaissance plane, Saturday morning October 27.

In any case, it follows that the effective deterrent against invasion posed by Khrushchev's deployment of nuclear missiles to the territory of Cuba was the tacit, perhaps inadvertent threat of his own loss of control: the implicit threat of an unauthorized missile firing by a subordinate commander under attack.

That threat depended essentially on the ground-based "forward" location of the weapons, where their crews would inevitably come under direct attack, or fear it imminently, in the event of American invasion or non-nuclear airstrike.

Here, then, is the functional link between the medium-range missiles (MRBMs) that Khrushchev sent to Cuba and the short-range nuclear missile forces (SNF) and nuclear artillery that have been stationed in Europe since the mid-Fifties.

To be sure, the analogy is even closer to the intermediate-range Pershing II and cruise missiles that were recently removed from Germany under the INF agreement. But contrary to most analysis, it is not the range of the weapon that is functionally

essential, but its location--in a potential combat zone--hence its vulnerability to attack or capture and to a "use it or lose it" mentality among its local commanders.

After all, any use of short-range nuclear weapons in Europe, whether authorized or not, is highly likely to lead in short order to the launching of longer-range weapons that can hit the Soviet Union. So the SNF are a tripwire for strategic weapons, just as the US ground troops in Europe are a tripwire for the SNF that accompany them.

The strategy that Khrushchev chose in 1962 to deter invasion of Cuba was the strategy that the US pressed on NATO in the mid-Fifties to deter invasion of West Germany and Western Europe. It is the strategy which President Bush is pressing Chancellor Kohl to maintain and "modernize" today. Indeed, we can better understand the specifics of the NATO strategy in the light of Khrushchev's "defense" of Cuba.

It is a strategy of deterring non-nuclear attack on an ally or client by threatening to initiate tactical nuclear warfare. More specifically, these first-use threats are implemented and made credible--especially against an opponent that could retaliate with nuclear weapons--by stationing nuclear weapons directly on the soil and relatively near the borders of the country being "defended."

An additional element is to accompany the weapons with sizeable numbers of one's own troops in the ally's territory, to make it still more plausible that either the national authorities or local commanders will use the tactical nuclear weapons to "protect" these national units or to avenge their loss. (Khrushchev, it now appears, sent 40,000 Soviet troops along with the missiles. The US keeps over 300,000 troops in West Europe as a "tripwire.")

Weapons and troops so placed in the path of any attacking force pose an inherent threat of possible nuclear launches that are uncontrolled and unauthorized by national-level commanders. Under conditions of nuclear parity, that implicit threat can be far more credible than the most explicit commitment that national authorities will deliberately initiate first-use.

Can it be credible enough to be deterrent? In Cuba, it was.

The Cuban Missile Crisis involved the strongest challenge to any deterrent nuclear forces--Soviet MRBMs in Cuba--to occur in the nuclear era. It was the one time when the commanders of one superpower were poised for and actively contemplating imminent attack on part of the nuclear forces of the other.

And in that test, the Soviets' implicit threat of unauthorized action--whether Khrushchev had ever consciously intended such a threat or not--operated strongly on the mind of the opposing Commander-in-Chief and his second in command, according to the latter's direct testimony.

There can be little doubt, to be short about it, that the short-range nuclear missiles and nuclear artillery on both sides of the borders in Europe--along with forward-based aircraft-- are just as effectively deterrent, and for exactly the same reason.

The often-cited notion that a President in Washington would be much more willing to order such weapons launched, because he believed or hoped that he could keep the resulting two-sided nuclear war limited within the borders of Germany, is at most a small and implausible part of that reason. A President who believed that could believe anything.

What is far more plausible is that in face of overwhelming attack some of these forward-based weapons would be fired because local commanders would fire them, from a variety of motives. That is credible, because it is all too true.

In fact, given the nuclear stand-off between the two Pacts, no other elements of either side's nuclear posture are remotely so credible for first-use. Not carrier aircraft or cruise missiles (though these would be closest); certainly not submarines or home-based missiles or bombers.

One could well conclude that these vulnerable, ground-based short-range nuclear forces are essential to the effective credibility of a strategy relying on threats of initiating and, if necessary, escalating nuclear warfare. That calculation underlies the Bush Administration position.

It is true--for NATO weapons and probably for Warsaw Pact forces as well-- that sergeants and lieutenants at the firing positions of SNF and nuclear artillery confront locks on the nuclear weapons, so-called Permissive Action Links, which prevent crews from firing them, initially, without codes from higher command.

But how much higher? That is a secret. One thing, however, is sure: it is not the President, or any commander in Washington, who monopolizes those codes, as the public is led to imagine. Nor are they held tight by a four-star general at NATO Headquarters. Division or corps command is a possible locus: regiment, even battalion not out of the question, depending on the weapons, and perhaps on conditions of alert.

All of these levels of command are subject to non-nuclear attack in the earliest minutes or hours of actual conflict, and

subject to being overrun in hours or days. Anyone attacking them would be right to worry about nuclear detonations, authorized or not. And so would their own national authorities. And all the rest of us.

Yet the attack could come anyway. That too is a lesson of the Cuban Missile Crisis. That dress rehearsal for superpower war, that field test of crisis stability under near-combat conditions, demonstrates both sides of the issues raised by the short-range nuclear weapons in Europe.

Of course, since November 9, 1989, the likelihood of a Warsaw Pact offensive into West Europe spearheaded by Soviet tanks has come to seem virtually impossible, so long as Gorbachev's present policies prevail. But that does not mean that armed conflict in the still highly-armed neighborhood of West and East Germany is totally ruled out, whether in the long run or even the short.

Conflict in East Europe is, if anything, more likely than before (we have just seen civil war in Rumania, and the resurgence of territorial and ethnic disputes in the Balkans and elsewhere) with the possibility of expansion and spillover. Direct involvement of Soviet troops in such a conflict would almost surely require a successor to Gorbachev in power. Western involvement, amazingly, might not require new officials; last month, December 1989, the French foreign minister proposed the possibility of armed involvement by Western forces or "volunteers"--alongside Soviet intervention, a suggestion that Secretary Baker seconded!--in the fighting then going on in Rumania.

Spillover into the regions where US nuclear weapons are deployed might be very unlikely. But what excuse is there for permitting the slightest possibility of this, by maintaining any nuclear weapons in that historic arena, weapons which in connection with such conflicts lack any conceivable legitimate function, including threat? (Whatever the imagined legitimacy of nuclear threats in deterring Soviet blitzkrieg, it certainly does not extend to nuclear threats any more than to nuclear war in circumstances like these).

To believe that their presence in an area of historic conflict and present tension is tolerable must be to believe that highest-level self-control and operational control is and will always be absolute, quite literally absolute. And the Cuban Missile Crisis disproves that.

The Cuban Missile Crisis does show that extended deterrence, the use of first-use nuclear threats against non-nuclear attack against non-nuclear attack, can work. Up to a point. It also shows how it could fail. In 1962 it could have failed despite

leaders on both sides who really were "determined" to avoid losing control and going to war.

And if this strategy fails in Europe, it can blow the lid off the Northern Hemisphere. That is the trouble with the strategy, and with the Bush Administration's position.

The lesson I indicated in the first section of this paper is all the more pointed in the light of the revelations mentioned in this third part.

On the one hand, what McNamara's recent testimony implies is that both he and--after a day or two's reflection--President Kennedy, desperately anxious to avoid nuclear war, were secretly determined to avoid at all costs an air attack or invasion of Cuba that might bring it about. If this inference is correct, their strategy and aims were considerably more cautious than some others in the ExComm believed them to be.

On the basis of other evidence (not discussed here) both McNamara and Kennedy seem clearly to have been ready to offer a public trade--the mutual withdrawal of US warheads in Turkey along with Soviet missiles in Cuba--rather than to carry out the air strike or invasion they were ostentatiously preparing.

In short, though no commentator seems to have drawn the blunt inference, both the threat implicit in these preparations and Robert Kennedy's explicit ultimatum to Ambassador Dobrynin on the night of October 27--threatening an air strike in 48 hours and rejecting any possibility of a public trade--appear to have been, in the eyes of the President, enormous bluffs.

Moreover, he expected them to fail, and almost surely intended to follow them with major concessions to end the crisis, including an offer publicly to withdraw the Turkish missiles.

And yet: the moral of the tale told in my Op-Ed piece above is that despite all these private resolutions, deterrence came within hours of breaking down.

Despite the President's conscious determination to avoid a war with Soviet forces, his willingness to do almost anything--even make humiliating public concessions--rather than to test the discipline of Soviet missilemen by attacking them, John Kennedy could have found himself doing just that on Sunday, October 28, if Cuban antiaircraft gunners had been closer to their marks on Saturday afternoon.

The President's bluffs--and Khrushchev's, too--came close to exploding. Contrary to their wishes and expectations, and in ways they neither controlled nor were aware of at the time, Kennedy and McNamara might well have found themselves, a few

hours after Robert Kennedy's threats to Dobrynin, taking the actions and getting the war they were anxious to avoid. And it could have had, in the end, the nuclear consequences that they most feared.

Khrushchev's clever strategy did not end well for him; but it risked, and barely avoided, far worse. Could the same strategy in Europe--now being doggedly defended by the Bush Administration--go so badly?

We could already rule out--even before the change in Soviet doctrine and deployment, well before the opening of the Wall--the possibility of a premeditated, aggressive surprise attack by Soviet forces "out of the blue," for the purpose of taking over Western Europe. That was no more a realistic concern under Brezhnev or Khrushchev than it is under Gorbachev. If that were the only way that Soviet tanks might have confront NATO SNF, there would never have been much to worry about.

When Pentagon planners postulated a Soviet blitzkrieg offensive against West Germany--or when Soviet tank divisions in East Germany rehearse such a "counteroffensive," as they have frequently done in training maneuvers over the last generation--both sides had contingencies in mind that were considerably more realistic, though their planned responses are not.

If an uprising in East Germany should have led to fighting between East German troops and Soviet divisions; if West German units should have found they could not bear to watch Germans being slaughtered by Russians, and prepared to or did cross the border to intervene; if Soviet tank divisions in East Germany, not having yet abandoned their operational plans and "set" of the last generation, should launch an offensive counterattack into West Germany...then the discipline of American and West German nuclear artillerymen and missilemen near the borders would have quickly been tested en masse, perhaps fatally.

Again, this was no layman's fantasy (though this particular sequence is rapidly becoming, or has already become since November 1989, a former military concern: unless Gorbachev should be replaced by a hardliner within the next year). For many years American and NATO planners regarded this sequence of events not just as one among many ways that conflict might arise between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, but as perhaps the most likely of dangerous contingencies.

An authoritative article in the most recent issue of Foreign Affairs starts by alluding to this traditionally secret concern. ["Central European Security," Summer 1989, by Henry Owen and Edward C. Meyer: the latter having been Army Chief of Staff under Carter and Reagan, the former head of the Policy Planning Staff

of the State Department under Johnson and Ambassador-at-large under Carter.] It begins (p. 22):

"The threat of war in Central Europe still exists. One does not have to credit Soviet leaders with an intent to attack Western Europe to believe this. The peoples of Eastern Europe are no more satisfied today with Soviet dominance than they were before 1914 with Austrian and Russian rule. Nor is it yet clear that the Soviet rulers are more ready to yield control of this region than were the Romanovs or the Hapsburgs.

Indeed, central Europe remains second only to the Middle East in its potential for conflicts that could embroil the great powers."

The unstated link between unrest and "war" in this passage is presumably something like the sequence described above, which includes some form of Western intervention into East Europe (as suggested in December, for Rumania, by the French Foreign Minister). What the authors do not explain is just how traditional US and NATO nuclear first-use policy--which they propose to maintain and protect against public discontent (as do President Bush and many centrist commentators even after the events of November and December)--relates helpfully, or legitimately, to this plausible picture of the continuing "threat."

Today as I write this--January 2, 1990--Tom Wicker's column in the New York Times salutes the new year and decade with this comment:

"We face, in fact, a changed and not a new world; and in some ways, it's more nearly an old world predating the cold war that has come to an end.

The German problem is certainly not new, though it now arises in a different context. The conflicts of Eastern Europe, once the confining cloak of Communist rule has been thrown off, may well be reawakened in all their ancient malignities. Mikhail Gorbachev's struggle with the dissident republics of his forcefully built empire is a magnification of a problem that has plagued the USSR almost from its inception."

Conservative commentators have drawn from this projection of a troubled future support for their position that deployments, the defense budget, and NATO commitments must not be reduced. Yet where in that old world being described is there a role for a nuclear tripwire: in Europe, or anywhere else?

Suppose that in the next year or two, independence movements in the USSR like those that have revolutionized East Europe should lead to a hardline replacement of Gorbachev by a leader and faction determined to preserve empire not only in the USSR itself but in parts of East Europe. Administration officials, speaking on background, have not only imagined, they have come close to predicting such a sequence.

As illustrated by events that occurred--and still others that were postulated--in Rumania last month, December, 1989, a complex and ambiguous combination of civil war, revolution and international intervention could result. If that conflict originated or spilled over into East or West Germany, it would be taking place among the most heavily nuclear-armed units in the world.

That really should be changed. And not some years from now. Starting today to remove such weapons promptly from both sides of the border would not be too soon. It is what the Soviets and West Germans have proposed, against the resistance of the Bush Administration: which should hear on this point from the Congress and the public.

A lesson for NATO, and the American public, from a crisis 27 years ago: It was as reckless and irresponsible for the American and West European governments to bring short-range nuclear weapons into a potential zone of conflict in the Fifties, and to keep them there till today (and for the Soviets to match such deployments in the Eighties) as it was for Nikita Khrushchev to send medium-range missiles to Cuba.

More generally--in the absence finally of the threat ("if," as Wicker says in his column today, "there ever was one") of a Hitlerian blitzkrieg by Soviet tank columns against West Europe--it should at last be seen as profoundly unacceptable to defend borders or national interests anywhere in the world by the threat of deliberate first-use of nuclear weapons, still less by the tacit threat of losing control of nuclear weapons, under any circumstances whatever.

That rules out anything close to present US strategy or nuclear deployment in Western Europe or South Korea and on US surface naval vessels. Likewise, covert nuclear dimensions of US intervention policies throughout the Third World, and the emerging "deterrence" policies of a number of lesser nuclear states.

As the Cold War ends, the era of nuclear threats should end with it. That is the yet-unlearned lesson of the Cuban Missile Crisis.